# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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# House of Commons

*Monday 15 October 2001*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## WORK AND PENSIONS

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

### Unemployment (Advice)

1. **Mr. Paul Stinchcombe** (Wellingborough): What plans he has to increase the amount of personal advice available to unemployed people at jobcentres. [3575]

**The Minister for Work (Mr. Nicholas Brown):** We are aiming to launch 15 of the 17 Jobcentre Plus pathfinder areas later this month; they comprise around 50 pathfinder offices. We anticipate that the remaining two pathfinder areas will be operating by the end of the year, once building work is completed.

From April next year, the Employment Service and the parts of the Benefits Agency that support people of working age will come together to form Jobcentre Plus. As the service rolls out, we will deliver an integrated service to employers and benefit claimants of working age nationally.

**Mr. Stinchcombe:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer, which is good news as far as it goes. However, what advice has he for my constituent, who has been unemployed for two years and is about to go on the new deal for the second time? He is unsure that it will be targeted to his needs because on the previous occasion, he was offered two modules of environmental studies at NVQ level 2 when he already has a first class honours degree in physics.

**Mr. Brown:** My hon. Friend's constituent is obviously a bright chap who is finding it difficult to get placed in the labour market. He is not typical, but it is the purpose of the new Jobcentre Plus structures, with their personally tailored advice, to ensure that individuals such as my hon. Friend's constituent can be properly placed. If more needs to be done to help him, the state is ready to stand in his corner.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The move towards personal advisers is welcome, but did the Minister notice during the summer that the Department's in-house briefings—I believe that the relevant briefing number is 84—demonstrated some staff anxiety about the amount of work that they are doing, which denies them the opportunity to get involved in the case load and the referral activities that are necessary for the scheme to work? Will the Minister assure the House that those anxieties will be tackled and that the new project, which deserves to succeed, will not be left wanting for lack of management back-up and resources?

**Mr. Brown:** I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks, and I welcome his broad support for the Jobcentre Plus concept. Some public servants believe that they will be required to do for Jobcentre Plus the sort of work that they currently do in benefits offices. That is not the intention. We are launching something new and different from what previously existed. The intention is to be far more proactive with individual claimants, go through their welfare entitlement as well as their job opportunities, and work closely with them over a period of time. All that is new. We believe that it is the right approach; the senior management of the public service is enthusiastic about it. I am sure that, as people see the new offices and the way in which the new service works, we will engage the enthusiasm of all who work for us.

**Mr. Bill O'Brien** (Normanton): Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that, when offering additional advice at jobcentres, staff will be acquainted with the position of war pensioners? People who receive a pension, and also get jobseeker's allowance because they are looking for employment, have been told they will lose their war pension. It is important to make them aware of the position when they register at the jobcentre for jobseeker's allowance.

**Mr. Brown:** I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's point is drawn to the attention of those who give advice on benefits entitlement before moving on to considering what employment is available, but the Government intend that work will pay for people in a range of different circumstances. Although there are always hard cases and exceptions, for the overwhelming majority of our fellow citizens, work rather than being on benefits will pay.

**Mr. James Clappison** (Hertsmere): The constituent of the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Stinchcombe) may not be typical, but does the Minister know that, according to the Department's most recent statistics, only 40 per cent. of those leaving the new deal for young people, and fewer than 20 per cent. of those leaving the new deal for the long-term unemployed received jobs that lasted for more than 13 weeks? Is not that disappointing, especially in times when many of them would have found work anyway? Is there not a case, especially in view of uncertain world economic conditions, for considering whether the new deal meets employers' needs and provides a good deal for the unemployed and the taxpayer?

**Mr. Brown:** I begin by welcoming the hon. Gentleman to his new responsibilities and I look forward to arguing about those matters with him, no doubt for a long time to come. I hope that that serves him well in his party.

I do not accept the deadweight cost argument. The new deal for young people has already got about 250,000 young people into permanent employment and has found employment for more than 300,000 young people. The hon. Gentleman makes the point that the labour market

may be loosening—we await events—but surely that makes the case even more firmly not for letting up, but for what we are doing. What alternative does he propose? We move from a welfare state to a welfare society, but what is a welfare society? I look forward to hearing from him in future exchanges.

**John Cryer** (Hornchurch): On personal advice for unemployed people who are also disabled, will my right hon. Friend examine the shortage of disability employment advisers, which seems to be significant, particularly in my area of the country in outer east London? Will he also bear in mind that resources seem to be drifting from disability employment advice to the access to work scheme, excellent though it is? That appears to be adding to the shortage.

**Mr. Brown:** We take the issue of advice to those who have disabilities seriously and I undertake to re-examine the matter, particularly in my hon. Friend's constituency, because he has raised it with me. As we roll out the new deal for the disabled, the Government intend to help into work people who have been disadvantaged in the labour market over a long period and to press ahead with that regardless of the circumstances in which the labour market more generally finds itself.

## Pension Provision

2. **Mr. Howard Flight** (Arundel and South Downs): If he will make a further statement on the McDonald report into pension provision. [3576]

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr. Alistair Darling):** As I told the hon. Gentleman when he asked a similar question on 25 June, we shall continue to discuss with interested parties and with him, no doubt, whether it is possible to devise workable and affordable alternatives to the annuity purchase requirement.

**Mr. Flight:** As the House will be aware, the Government have stalled for three years on considering stopping people having to buy annuities by the age of 75. The argument that the Secretary of State made previously involved concerns for tax revenues, but there is a meeting, of which he will be aware, between the Treasury and the Retirement Income Reform Group on Wednesday. If the Treasury's fears are allayed, will he confirm that the Government will move ahead in earnest and before retiring pensioners suffer further damage? My concern is that the real policy may be that which the Minister for Pensions commented on to the Trades Union Congress this summer.

**Mr. Darling:** I am aware that a meeting is taking place, but the problem with which the hon. Gentleman must come to terms is that the majority of people in this country have only a small sum with which to purchase their pension pot—about £30,000 on average. We must think long and hard about changing from the present system to a new one that might benefit a few people, but which might disadvantage the majority. None of us wants that, and I make a point that bears repetition.

Some people face difficulty because of increased longevity and because interest rates are generally lower. On the other hand, annuity rates vary substantially and I repeat what the Government have said previously: many people would be well advised to seek the best offer on retirement, because the current difference—between 5 per cent. at the lower end and 12 per cent. at the top end—is dramatic.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff, West): Does the Secretary of State know of the other proposals on annuities provision such as those from the Tenon group? Does he agree that if such proposals are shown to be workable and if they would not result in loss of revenue to the Treasury, the Government should implement them as swiftly as possible?

**Mr. Darling:** It is certainly true that if someone proposed a much better scheme that cost no more and gave pensioners lots more money, most Governments would consider it. I am aware of the latest proposals—indeed, I have received a copy of the letter that set them out—but I repeat the point that I made to the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Mr. Flight). The current position is that the vast majority of those who are retiring have, on average, £30,000 available to purchase an annuity. Any question of drawing down a lump sum is academic, assuming that they expect to live for a reasonable number of years into retirement.

I am not against change and the Government will consider alternatives if they are better, but we cannot embark on a course of action that might benefit a few people, some of whom are substantially well provided for, at the expense of the majority. I ask my hon. Friend to examine the implications of all those proposals, because, as with so many on the matter, one must ask where they are coming from, exactly what drives the desire to make reforms and who they would benefit.

## Work (Deprived Areas)

3. **Mr. David Crausby** (Bolton, North-East): What plans he has to help people in deprived areas find work. [3577]

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr. Alistair Darling):** The new deal has helped thousands of people back into work. In addition to Jobcentre Plus, which will open this autumn, we have also introduced action teams for jobs and employment zones, which are helping people in the most deprived areas. Today we are increasing the number of action teams from 40 to 53, and further steps will be announced in due course.

**Mr. Crausby:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, but what action is he taking to help the increasing number of people who are losing jobs in manufacturing to find other jobs in the industry? Does he agree that this nation cannot afford to lose those valuable skills?

**Mr. Darling:** I agree with my hon. Friend that we must do everything possible to ensure that we get people who lose their job, whether it is in manufacturing or elsewhere, back into work as quickly as possible. That philosophy has underpinned the Government's whole approach to

their employment policies over the past four years, and it will continue to do so. It is worth bearing it in mind that, although there have undoubtedly been a number of redundancies—some quite large ones have been announced over the past few weeks—some 34,500 new jobs were announced in the month to 10 October. For some reason, the announcement of new jobs does not tend to get the same coverage as redundancies. I do not for one moment seek to play down the significance of the redundancies that have been announced and their effect on individuals and on the communities where they take place, but I assure my hon. Friend that the Employment Service will do everything possible, through its jobs transition service and other measures, to ensure that those who lose their job can get back into work.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York): The Secretary of State will be aware that although rural constituencies such as the Vale of York have pockets of deprivation, they have no physical jobcentre. What will his Department do to give people in those deprived areas access to jobcentres, which are sometimes a considerable distance away?

**Mr. Darling:** I am well aware that many rural areas suffer unemployment and deprivation. The Government's policy right across the board, whether it is investment in education or in the Employment Service, is directed as much towards those people as it is towards people living in urban areas. Everybody, no matter where they live, has access to a jobcentre or the new Jobcentre Plus. There has never been a jobcentre in every high street; there was not when the Conservative Government were in power. The difference between our two Governments is that we are making sure at every opportunity, whether it is through jobcentres, new deals or action teams for jobs, that we do everything possible to help people who lose their jobs to get back into work, especially where there is long-term unemployment. We are changing the tax and benefit systems to make sure that work pays and doing more to ensure that work is possible for people who, until now, might have been denied that opportunity.

**Mr. Frank Field** (Birkenhead): On behalf of my constituents may I thank the Secretary of State for reminding us of the measures that the Government have already introduced to help people without jobs to find work? However, does he accept that many of us—now on both sides of the House—represent areas where, year on year, fewer jobs are available, while areas within travelling distance have more than full employment? Will he consider, as an additional part of his strategy of helping people into work, allowing people to choose personal advisers from areas with a shortage of workers, rather than from areas where there are not enough jobs to go around?

**Mr. Darling:** The present system, which we have introduced in the past couple of years, ensures that no matter where a jobcentre is, vacancies are linked up across the whole country. For example, somebody going into a jobcentre in my right hon. Friend's constituency could see on the touch-screen computer facilities the jobs available throughout the country. Simply because someone happens to live in a constituency with a more difficult employment situation, they should not be denied the opportunity—and, indeed, the help, which can be provided by the action team for jobs—to get work in areas where there are more jobs than people. It is important that we look at the employment situation across the whole country precisely to tackle the problems that my right hon. Friend knows only too well and that we see in other parts of the country.

**Sir Sydney Chapman** (Chipping Barnet): Will the Secretary of State share with the House his assessment of the cost and cost-effectiveness of his new deal strategy? If he feels that it has been good value for money, how is it that unemployment has fallen less quickly under this Government than it did under the previous one?

**Mr. Darling:** I know that the hon. Gentleman spent many years as a Whip when his party was in government so he had to obey a Trappist vow and say nothing, but I did not know that he was not allowed to read anything either. He must have noticed the extremely high levels of unemployment that the Conservative Government managed to achieve on more than one occasion. To claim credit for getting levels down is stretching credulity.

The hon. Gentleman may care to consider the two independent surveys of the new deal for young people, which showed that, but for the new deal, youth unemployment would have been twice as high. That represents a substantial saving for our gross domestic product because of the benefits that we do not have to pay out and the increased tax payments from people who have got back into work.

We still have a lot more to do for the over-50s. It is a staggering fact that one third of people over the age of 50 are out of work. It is interesting to note that since 1979—I pick that date at random—that has cost the country £16 billion in GDP. Surely that is evidence that the Government are right to continue what they started, and to do even more through the new deal and other measures to get people into work.

### Disabled People

4. **Linda Gilroy** (Plymouth, Sutton): What support his Department is giving to help people with disabilities get back into work. [3578]

14. **Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): What support his Department is giving to help those with disabilities to get back into work. [3589]

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr. Alistair Darling):** Our objective is to help all those who can work to do so. That is why we are introducing a single gateway to the benefits system, so that there is not only a clear focus on work but we can ensure that people are getting the right level of support.

**Linda Gilroy:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Those measures are already helping many of my constituents who are among the 1 million people with disabilities who the Disability Rights Commission says would like to work. Will he leave no stone unturned to ensure that his Department helps such people into work, so that they are not abandoned and forgotten, as they were for far too long under the Conservative Government?

**Mr. Darling:** I strongly agree with my hon. Friend. The problem in the past was that, although the system

offered some help to people who were registered as unemployed or jobseekers since 1996, it did precious little to help other people of working age who were not working for one reason or another. That is why in July this year I promised the House that I would lay regulations before it this autumn, which it will be able to debate through arrangements that will no doubt be made. Those regulations will introduce new measures to ensure that no one on, for example, incapacity benefit needs to go for more than three years without their case being thoroughly looked into to make sure that all opportunities for work are considered if that is appropriate, and if that is not appropriate to make sure that people are getting the right level of benefit. It is critical that we should not leave people of working age without any opportunity to work. That was one of the main failings of the system in the past, and we do not intend to perpetuate it.

**Mr. Miller:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that more needs to be done to inform employers and the general public about the contribution that people with disabilities could make to the work force? Sadly, in some sectors there is much ignorance about the potential of people with disabilities and the benefit of those people to employers and to the public.

**Mr. Darling:** I agree with my hon. Friend. Too many people are reluctant, for one reason or another, to employ people with a disability. Sometimes it is because of a wholly irrational fear. That problem needs to be tackled. One of the main purposes of the Disability Rights Commission is to raise awareness and to tackle prejudice. I assure my hon. Friend that the Government will do everything they can to tackle prejudice, which has no place in this area of employment. We are anxious to raise awareness and to ensure that we increase the number of people with a disability getting into work.

**Mr. Steve Webb** (Northavon): The Government presumably believe that work-focused interviews are in the interests of disabled people themselves. They also tell us repeatedly that up to 1 million disabled people are not working and want to work. If the interviews are good for disabled people—and there are lots of them out there who want to work—why do the Government need to blackmail those people by threatening to cut their benefit if they will not turn up for an interview?

**Mr. Darling:** That is an interesting definition of blackmail.

The hon. Gentleman knows that a large number of people in this country who have a disability could work, with the right level of support. Our new deals have shown that. There are many people now in work who in the past got absolutely nothing, and they ought to be supported.

The new system that we are introducing through Jobcentre Plus will mean that everyone of working age, whatever their circumstances, will—as a condition of receiving benefit—have to come for an interview to see what options are available.

**Mr. Webb:** Or else!

**Mr. Darling:** I make no apology whatever for telling someone aged, say, under 25 who wants to sign on for jobseekers allowance, if there is no reason whatever why that person should not work, "You must come for an interview, and if you can work you ought to work." If the Liberals do not believe in that, I part company with them. As for people with disabilities, we have said yes, they must come for an interview, and yes, they must see what options are available to them. No one is saying "You must take a job, no matter what the circumstances are." We are saying "At the very least, you ought to know what options are available to you."

The point is simple. If there are 1 million people out there who want to work, we as a Government owe it to them to ensure that they receive the right help and assistance. I am astonished that the Liberals should be against that.

**Mrs. Angela Browning** (Tiverton and Honiton): What future plans has the Secretary of State for the therapeutic earnings rule to assist people with lifelong disabilities to obtain paid employment?

**Mr. Darling:** The hon. Lady has raised that issue on many occasions, and because of her own experience she is anxious for us to improve the situation. I am as well, but unfortunately this afternoon I am not in a position to tell the hon. Lady anything with a view to making an imminent announcement. I assure her, however, that I am keeping the situation under review.

**Miss Anne Begg** (Aberdeen, South): As we roll out the new deal for disabled people, the standard of personal advisers is crucial to ensuring that disabled people are given the right advice. That has already been mentioned this afternoon. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the training of advisers is of the highest quality, and that they are well trained in understanding the difficulties and anxieties experienced by many disabled people in regard to seeking employment—although they desperately want to work?

**Mr. Darling:** I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. A heavy duty is placed on those who advise, and it is important for them to know the rules so that they can offer all the help that is available. As for the new deal for disabled people, which has only just been rolled out nationally, the fact that just under 40 per cent. of people have gone into work shows that these initiatives work.

**Mr. David Willetts** (Havant): The Secretary of State is right: it is important for us to do all that we can to help disabled people into work. Will he confirm that the number of people claiming incapacity benefit is now at its highest for three years? There is a clear upward trend.

Does the Secretary of State agree that it is no good expecting even more medical tests when the Government cannot deliver the medical tests that are required already? Will he confirm that the last Minister for disabled people, whom he caused to be sacked, was right when he said this?

"Seventy-three per cent. of those tested were recommended by the doctor for re-testing within 18 months."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 15 April 1999; c. 786.]

Talking about tests after three years is not really relevant, when the Government cannot even deliver the tests that are recommended after 18 months. How many medical tests are there now, within the 18 months recommended?

Does the Secretary of State agree that the right way forward is to deliver the conditions that already exist in regulations and are not being properly enforced, rather than causing unnecessary distress to disabled people by changing regulations yet again when the current ones cannot be made to work?

**Mr. Darling:** I do not want to be churlish, but the last Minister for the disabled is still a Minister in this Government, albeit in a different Department.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his reappointment, if congratulation is appropriate. Perhaps he felt that he had no choice but to soldier on, despite the difficulties that he ran into in the last Parliament.

The object of our proposals is to ensure that people on incapacity benefit have the opportunity to be advised on their benefit entitlement, as well as on work opportunities, where appropriate. The problem is that too many people go on to incapacity benefit and are simply written off. They do not get the help and advice that they want.

Medical examinations are indeed appropriate and we are not proposing to change the regime in that regard, although the administration of the examinations is being improved.

The hon. Gentleman asked about trends in incapacity benefit. The number of people in receipt of the benefit has gone up in the past year or two, mainly because there are now more women with contribution conditions. I do not understand it to be the Conservative policy—yet—to strip people of their contribution conditions.

## Job Action Teams

6. **Mr. Ernie Ross** (Dundee, West): What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of action teams for jobs. [3581]

**The Minister for Work (Mr. Nicholas Brown):** Action teams for jobs have already helped more than 13,500 people into work in some of the most disadvantaged parts of our country. The two key elements to the teams' success are the outreach work and local flexibility. The teams focus on people's abilities, help people into work whenever that is possible and provide the right support when it is not. I am pleased to confirm that one of the new teams announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier today is starting operations in my hon. Friend's constituency today.

**Mr. Ross:** We have been waiting for this to happen and working closely with our colleagues in the Employment Service. Following my experience of 18 miserable years under the Tories, one change is very clear. Importantly for people who are seriously disadvantaged and need to find employment, people in the Employment Service can now do the job that they were employed to do: get people into work. The atmosphere in the Dundee and Tayside office is one that is likely to lead to success.

**Mr. Brown:** My hon. Friend's remarks echo my own experience. When I visit Employment Service premises, I find a willingness to accept the Government's new proactive approach, and indeed to do so with enthusiasm. The new elements are well known. Local flexibility and the outreach work of the action teams are proving very effective, and I am sure that that will be the case in my hon. Friend's constituency.

**Mr. Graham Brady** (Altrincham and Sale, West): If the local flexibility available in the employment zones is effective, why does the Minister not extend it throughout the country?

**Mr. Brown:** We are testing a range of service delivery mechanisms, and of course it is our objective to roll out Jobcentre Plus, which contains many of the elements, and draws on the experience, of the ONE pilots and the action zones.

## Pensioners (Capital Limits)

7. **Ms Bridget Prentice** (Lewisham, East): What progress is being made to reform social security regulations governing capital limits for pensioners. [3582]

**The Minister for Pensions (Mr. Ian McCartney):** We have already taken steps to reform capital limits for pensioners. In addition, the pension credit consultation paper set out our proposals for abolishing both the capital limits and the assumed £1 a week rate of return for every £250 of capital for pensioners.

**Ms Prentice:** I am grateful for that reply, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have constituents, as we no doubt all do, who, as pensioners, fall between two stools. What guarantee can he give that, when the pension credit is introduced, people who have some savings do not lose out on other benefits?

**Mr. McCartney:** That is a fair point, and we have two measures in place to respond to it. On top of the guaranteed minimum, we will pay a cash award of about 60p for every £1 of a second pension or savings income, which solves the first problem that my hon. Friend highlighted, concerning individuals with modest savings or small second pensions being disadvantaged because of their thriftiness. Secondly, when more pensioners get more help through the pension credit, that will generally mean more help through housing benefit and/or council tax benefit. We are considering what changes are needed in the design of housing and council tax benefit to ensure that they complement the more generous rules that will apply in pension credit.

**Annabelle Ewing** (Perth): While we are dealing with pensioner benefits, I should like to ask the Minister whether the reports that appeared in the Scottish press at the weekend—to the effect that the Secretary of State has refused on behalf of the United Kingdom Government to continue to pay attendance allowance with respect to Scottish pensioners following the implementation in the Scottish Parliament of the proposals on free personal care for the elderly—are correct. If so, does that not breach the current principle of the universality of benefits throughout the United Kingdom and hence amount to discrimination instigated by the United Kingdom Government against Scottish pensioners under the current benefit system?

**Mr. McCartney:** I give the hon. Lady an absolute assurance: we are keeping the United Kingdom benefit

system. That is the whole point of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's contribution to the debate. I assure the hon. Lady that the Government, working closely with our colleagues in Scotland, do not intend to disturb the arrangements within the United Kingdom and the national benefits system.

**Mr. Frank Roy** (Motherwell and Wishaw): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, at the moment, pensioners in this country who have received incapacity benefit move from that benefit to their old-age pension. Some 160,000 people have done so this year. They are paid incapacity benefit until their 60th or 65th birthday. However, is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a week between their birthday and the date on which they receive the benefit of their state pension? Does he agree that that anomaly should be looked at as quickly as possible?

**Mr. McCartney:** I will write a note to my hon. Friend. That anomaly has always existed, but those involved get the income that they are entitled to, and I shall send my hon. Friend a chart showing how that works.

## Carers

8. **John Robertson** (Glasgow, Anniesland): What plans he has to introduce benefit payments for carers. [3583]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Maria Eagle):** The Government already pay benefits to carers. Last autumn, the Government announced a package of measures, worth more than £500 million over three years, to enhance the current social security provision for carers. Two of the measures were implemented in April this year. The invalid care allowance earnings limit was increased from £50 to £72 a week and the carer premium, paid through the income-related benefits, was increased from £14.15 to £24.40.

Three other measures require more substantial legislative changes. They are the extension of claims to ICA to people aged 65 and over; the extension of entitlement to ICA for up to eight weeks after the death of the person being cared for; and a welcome change in the name of the benefit to carers allowance to reflect more closely the purpose of the benefit. We propose to introduce those measures by means of a regulatory reform order as soon as possible. In fact, the consultation on that matter ends today.

**John Robertson:** I thank my hon. Friend for her reply. I welcome the fact that the Department is consulting on this matter, and the proposed change of name from invalid care allowance to carers allowance will benefit people because it is a simpler name to understand. One of the problems has been that people have not understood what a carer is, and the people concerned found the word "invalid" derogatory. However, I am concerned that the allowances of those who claim benefits for the people who are disabled, or who are being cared for, are affected by the fact that the carer receives the ICA. That has caused some problems for the people who receive the allowance, and they feel that they are being treated unfairly. Will my hon. Friend comment?

**Maria Eagle:** My hon. Friend suggests that those who are cared for may lose benefit when ICA is given to the carer. The only circumstance in which I think that that occurs is where the severe disability premium is withdrawn from someone who suddenly acquires a carer when they did not have a carer before. The severe disability premium is paid to enable people to pay for care where they do not have a carer. Therefore, if they suddenly acquire a carer, or a family member comes to care for them, they are no longer eligible for that benefit, but the carer may be eligible for ICA. I do not consider that that is a case of benefit being withdrawn because a carer receives benefit; it is simply another example of the overlapping benefit rules, about which those of us who are becoming familiar with the field know only too well.

**Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East): In the Minister's initial reply, she said that the Government intend to end as soon as possible the discrimination against people who become carers for the first time after the age 65. That is very welcome, but does the hon. Lady recall that, following nearly a year of pressure from the Conservative Opposition, one of her predecessors in office gave a pledge to do that

"as soon as the legislative timetable permits"?—[*Official Report*, 30 November 2000; Vol. 357, c. 857W.]

When will that actually happen?

**Maria Eagle:** I disagree with the hon. Gentleman about the pressure coming from the Conservative Opposition. Pressure was not needed, because this is something that we have wanted to do. However, the hon. Gentleman is well aware that legislative time in this place is at a premium.

We will implement the change by using a regulatory reform order and, now that the consultation is over, that order will be laid as soon as possible. The hon. Gentleman may be aware of the new procedure by which the order goes to the Deregulation Committee, which will have 60 days to consider it. Thereafter, it will be subject to the super-affirmative procedure, which I certainly looking forward to getting my teeth into. I hope that the order will become law shortly thereafter, although of course a similar procedure will be followed in the other place.

## Unemployment

9. **Dr. Vincent Cable** (Twickenham): What assessment he has made of the numbers of people of working age who are able and willing to work but are neither working nor registered as seeking work or as claimants. [3584]

**The Minister for Work (Mr. Nicholas Brown):** About 4.1 million people of working age are not working or are in receipt of an out-of-work benefit, and we estimate that there are about 500,000 people of working age who are partners of benefit claimants and who are not working, registered for work or claiming benefits themselves.

**Dr. Cable:** I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he not acknowledge that, whereas the claimant count position

is improving, the figure of 4 million is growing and that the problem particularly affects men? Is he aware that 27 per cent. of all men aged between 50 and 64 are out of work and that 30 per cent. of all unskilled men of all ages are out of work? How does he intend to re-prioritise the Government's labour market policies to address their specific needs and particularly the age discrimination element?

**Mr. Brown:** It is precisely that issue with which the new deal is designed to cope. The hon. Gentleman's figures are broadly correct, and it is a tragedy that people of working age are looking to the state benefit system for a form of early retirement.

As the hon. Gentleman knows probably only too well, such circumstances have come about as a result of the huge shake-out of labour in heavy engineering industries, mining, shipbuilding and steel works in the 1980s, when the then Government were effectively prepared to dump people on to incapacity benefit rather than to try to find them a place in the labour market. This Government reject that approach, believing it to be cruel. We want to help people into employment when they are of working age. That means focusing on the problems of those who are older but who can still find a place in the labour market. It also means making sure that we find them work and, moreover, ensuring that that work remunerates them more than being on benefits ever could.

**Dr. Brian Iddon** (Bolton, South-East): I have a constituent who has been helped through education and who is three quarters of his way through a degree course. A firm has paid his way but, unfortunately, that firm has folded and he is no longer able to complete his course. He has sought the jobseeker's allowance, but has been refused because he wants to study. Will my right hon. Friend's Department examine the jobseeker's allowance regulations positively to enable such people to stay in work and, indeed, improve their employability?

**Mr. Brown:** I am not sure that that is a matter for the jobseeker's allowance regulations, but I promise to consider the case of my hon. Friend's constituent and to examine the issue more generally. It sounds to me as though what he has described is an anomaly, but hardship funds are designed to help in such circumstances. I will ask my office to examine the individual case to see what can be done to help my hon. Friend's constituent.

### Drug Rehabilitation

10. **Ms Dari Taylor** (Stockton, South): What proportion of people on the new deal for 18 to 24-year-olds, who were referred to drug rehabilitation centres in the last 12 months, went on to full-time employment in the north-east region. [3585]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Malcolm Wicks):** More than 25,000 young people in the north-east have moved into jobs through the new deal. Separate data on the number of them who attended drug rehabilitation centres are not collected. However, we are committed to helping people with drug problems overcome them and move into work. We are therefore launching a £40 million programme of support for drug misusers early next year.

**Ms Taylor:** I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but may I say to him that this is a very serious problem in the north-east and, particularly, in my constituency of Stockton, South? In what way does his Department work with the Home Office and the Cabinet Office to ensure that we put together a joined-up strategy so that young people and older people who are drug addicts know that there is help for them and—more important than just help—that there is pride at the end of the line because they will have a job?

**Malcolm Wicks:** We know that this is a serious problem in most constituencies and that it is complicated. That is why the Government have a joined-up approach across Whitehall. This Department's contribution is a £40 million programme to help to identify those who are drug misusers and bring into the community a co-ordinator to get the services working together, and with the voluntary sector. My hon. Friend is right: we need to work across Whitehall—starting, of course, with young people in our schools.

### Pensioner Poverty

11. **Dr. Howard Stoate** (Dartford): What progress is being made in combating pensioner poverty. [3586]

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr. Alistair Darling):** Some 2 million pensioners are now receiving the minimum income guarantee. On average, they are £15 a week better off than they would have been in 1997.

**Dr. Stoate:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. It is certainly very good news for many pensioners who have lived for years in poverty. What measures can the Government take to improve the uptake of the minimum income guarantee, and approximately how many people might that equate to in my constituency of Dartford who may benefit from the improvements in their incomes?

**Mr. Darling:** Just over 1,500 pensioners in Dartford receive the minimum income guarantee. We have embarked on a substantial take-up campaign that has resulted in more than 100,000 pensioners throughout the country receiving it, and that group has received on average about £20 a week extra. In addition, the application form for the minimum income guarantee is being reduced to 10 pages and will be available shortly. That and other measures will ensure that more and more pensioners get the money to which they are entitled.

**Mr. Paul Burstow** (Sutton and Cheam): Does the Secretary of State accept that the rules governing hospital downrating for pensions and benefits cause considerable hardship and distress for many pensioners? Will he take steps to review that urgently to ensure that the Department for Work and Pensions is not contributing to the Department of Health's problem with bed blocking?

People find it difficult to get their benefits back on-line when they have been in hospital for weeks and have had their benefits first reduced and then stopped altogether.

**Mr. Darling:** I agree that we must do everything possible to ensure that people who ought to be discharged from hospital do not remain there, especially because of a problem with benefits. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that ever since the modern welfare state was established more than 50 years ago measures have been taken to stop the double provision of public funds. All such matters are, of course, kept under review.

**Mr. Ian Davidson** (Glasgow, Pollok): Does the Secretary of State accept that more work needs to be done on the statistics that relate to the minimum income guarantee? Although the overall increase is welcome, it is not certain that it is evenly spread across the country. In particular, my constituency has experienced difficulties in obtaining figures for those who have claimed the minimum income guarantee, despite substantial take-up campaigns. Does my right hon. Friend accept that it would be helpful to identify those blackspots where a large number of pensioners have not been claiming so that we can focus further attention on them?

**Mr. Darling:** It is possible to identify the number of pensioners in each constituency who are receiving the minimum income guarantee. Of course, one can never be absolutely sure how many are entitled but do not claim because the state does not necessarily know their circumstances. However, my hon. Friend is right: the next stage of our campaign is to look at those areas where we have reason to believe that there are problems with take-up to ensure that every pensioner who is entitled to the minimum income guarantee receives it. As I said earlier, after the last campaign those pensioners who became entitled to and received the minimum income guarantee were on average £20 a week better off. That is a substantial increase in their income.

**Mr. Tim Boswell** (Daventry): The Secretary of State will be aware that his Department produced statistics and estimates on benefit take-up as recently as 27 September last. Is he not concerned that while last year 500,000 eligible pensioners were not claiming income support, this year's figure is much nearer 600,000, an increase of 20 per cent? That trend is also reflected in figures for council tax benefit and housing benefit, which are in fact slightly worse.

Does the Secretary of State not think that the only plausible explanation for that problem, which I am sure concerns and shocks us all, is that the system is becoming ever more complex? Does he not admit that the only possible solution offered by the Government will make the problem even worse?

**Mr. Darling:** I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. In the report that he quotes, the estimated number of pensioners who fail to claim income support is between 300,000 and 600,000. The report itself says that care should be taken when interpreting the take-up statistics as they come from estimates from data that are less than perfect. That particular series of statistics has its limitations precisely because of the very wide range in the estimates.

I assume that for the purposes of this question the hon. Gentleman is in favour of more pensioners receiving the money to which they are entitled, and I agree with him that we need to do more to identify pensioners who are entitled to the minimum income guarantee. However, I note that the new leader of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith), said of the minimum income guarantee:

"I can think of nothing to recommend it."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1999; Vol. 327, c. 740.]

That is a very odd way to refer to a policy that gives pensioners an average increase of £15 a week.

## Benefit Take-up

12. **Mr. Bill Tynan** (Hamilton, South): What discussions he has had with pensioner organisations about initiatives to inform older people of their eligibility for pensions and benefits. [3587]

**The Minister for Pensions (Mr. Ian McCartney):** My Department, in partnership with organisations working with older people, is developing a series of initiatives designed to encourage take-up of the minimum income guarantee, including an information leaflet about the guarantee which has been available since the beginning of September. From today, when people claim their retirement pension, we will ask them questions to see whether they are entitled to the minimum income guarantee as well.

**Mr. Tynan:** I thank my right hon. Friend for the information that he has given, particularly about people going into retirement. I am sure that many hon. Members, like myself, have pensioners in their constituency who are failing to receive their entitlement, especially the minimum income guarantee. I suggest that additional resources are made available for a benefits check to target existing pensioners. That would assist in identifying those who are entitled to the minimum income guarantee and ensuring that they receive it.

As part of his campaign, will my right hon. Friend visit Hamilton, South so that we can make sure that my constituents are exposed to the best possible publicity and receive the benefits to which they are entitled?

**Mr. McCartney:** Following a request by my hon. Friend and his local council leader, I have agreed to go to his constituency on 8 November to discuss the pensions strategy and our wider plans for older people. *[Laughter.]* I do not know why hon. Members are laughing. Is that not what Ministers are supposed to do—go out and meet our fellow citizens? The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) used to jeer when 2 million pensioners could not get a penny out of the last Government and were living in absolute poverty. This Government are going out to find those 2 million pensioners and give them their entitlement, which they were denied by the hon. Gentleman's party when it was in power.

I can tell my hon. Friend that we are improving uptake and increasing the resources devoted to that. Secondly, when the pensioner credit becomes available, all pensioners aged 65 and over will, through a new pension service, be invited to participate in a discussion so that

we can ascertain immediately whether they are entitled to the pensioner credit. Some 5.5 million pensioner households will benefit from that policy.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield): A little while ago, the Secretary of State spoke, quite rightly, about employers' prejudice against people with disabilities. Does the Minister agree that there is also employer prejudice against people who are older but below pension age? What steps is he taking to ensure that businesses employ people under 65, who have something very valuable to offer, thus taking them off benefits?

**Mr. McCartney:** If that is the hon. Gentleman's job application to the new leader of his party, I will take it up on his behalf.

The Government are very committed to working with employers to eradicate age discrimination. We will legislate by 2006 to prevent such discrimination in the workplace. In the meantime, through our code of practice and the national "Age Positive" campaign, which works with employers, significant numbers of older workers are returning to the work force for the first time in many years. A range of employers who would normally make workers redundant because of their age are changing their practice. In addition, advertisements that discriminate on the basis of age have almost disappeared. We have given employers a warning that there is only a short time before such adverts cannot be used.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman does find a place on the Conservative Front Bench before he reaches the age of 75. If he has not done so by 2006, he will be able to use legislation introduced by this Government to do something about it.

**James Purnell** (Stalybridge and Hyde): One of my constituents recently lost her partner in a car crash. He had two pensions: an occupational pension, which will pay my constituent a pension, and a pension from the Teachers Pensions Agency, which does not recognise unmarried partners. What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to encourage the TPA and other public sector pension organisations to recognise unmarried partners?

**Mr. McCartney:** This is a tragic case. There is a meeting today to discuss such issues with the Department. There has been a Government strategy across the public sector in order to try to improve pension arrangements. Changes could include the potential for additional contributions from those in the scheme. However, areas of discrimination are being addressed, and I shall write to my hon. Friend about the matter following the discussions.

**Mr. David Willetts** (Havant): Will the Minister confirm that pension organisations are very worried that older people will not receive their benefits if they cannot cash giro cheques at their local post offices? There is much uncertainty about the Government's plans for a universal bank. I hope that the Minister will today end that uncertainty by answering three specific questions. First, is the universal bank proposal still on track? Secondly, has the Department been asked to take the lead in a review of the universal bank proposal? Thirdly, how many benefit claimants do the Government expect to open universal bank accounts? Following his rather cavalier answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Motherwell and Wishaw (Mr. Roy), it would be helpful to receive real answers and not be referred to a chart.

**Mr. McCartney:** First, the universal bank is going to happen. Secondly, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is overseeing the programme. Thirdly, thank goodness we are a Labour Government. If the Tory Government had still been in office, there would not only be no universal bank but no post office for people to go to.

## Unemployment

13. **Brian White** (Milton Keynes, North-East): What plans he has to enable the hardest-to-help unemployed people find work. [3588]

**The Minister for Work (Mr. Nicholas Brown):** The range of new deals helps disadvantaged groups to move from welfare into work. We are increasing the number of action teams for jobs and extending employment zones, which help people in the most deprived areas. The sum of £40 million has been allocated to the progress-to-work initiative, to help unemployed drug users, which will start early next year. Further funding is also being arranged through the new deals to pilot further specialist help for others, including homeless people and ex-offenders.

**Brian White:** As my right hon. Friend will be aware, in a city such as the one that I represent, which has benefited from the ONE pilot scheme and where unemployment is now less than 1 per cent., employers are having to recruit from as far afield as Nottingham and Derby. There is a small group of people who employers will not employ, even though they have been through most of the options that the jobcentre can provide. Such people have lost out on national vocational qualifications and so on, and cannot gain employment even in areas such as ours. Will the Minister ensure that, under new procedures and when Jobcentre Plus is rolled out, the plight of that small but vulnerable group is addressed and that there is more flexibility in the system so that they do not lose out further?

**Mr. Brown:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I passionately believe that we should not overlook a group of our fellow citizens who are disadvantaged in the labour market. It is the role of the second wave of new deals to help such groups, and we intend to do so regardless of changing labour market circumstances.

**Mr. David Heath** (Somerton and Frome): To follow the question asked by the hon. Member for Vale of York (Miss McIntosh), does the right hon. Gentleman agree that some of the most difficult people to get into employment are those who live in very rural areas and that the biggest single impediment that they face is transport—to either employment opportunities or vocational training? Will he speak to his colleagues in the Department for Education and Skills to make it easier for people to get to vocational training centres where public transport is not available? Will he reject the present moped scheme restrictions,

which do not include large parts of my very rural constituency simply because people live in towns—towns where there are no vocational training opportunities?

**Mr. Brown:** The hon. Gentleman is right that there are special features to social exclusion in rural areas. There are a range of reasons for that. It is too simplistic to say that it is just about transport problems, although they are clearly part of it. It is the Government's hope that a more proactive approach—through Jobcentre Plus and action zones where they apply—will carry with it a range of local flexibilities that are tailored to address precisely the problems that the hon. Gentleman identifies.

**David Cairns** (Greenock and Inverclyde): My right hon. Friend may be aware that one of the 15 pathfinder Jobcentre Plus programmes is in my constituency, in Greenock. Does he agree that to tackle residual and long-term unemployment it is important not only that the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency work together, but that all the other agencies in the field, chiefly the Inland Revenue, the careers service and local authorities, also work in partnership?

**Mr. Brown:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is essential that public services work across departmental boundaries toward a common objective—helping those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market.

## Anti-terrorism Measures

3.30 pm

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Blunkett):** With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the legislative steps necessary to counter the threat from international terrorism.

First, I pay tribute to all those in the security and emergency services and elsewhere who have already risen to the challenge over the past five weeks, and all those who have assisted in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack in New York itself.

It is the first job of Government and the essence of our democracy that we safeguard rights and freedoms, the most basic of which is to live safely and in peace. It is now necessary that we look afresh, in a measured and proportionate manner, at whether our legal framework is adequate and our security sufficient.

Although the nature and the level of the threat is different from what was previously envisaged, wholesale revision of our anti-terrorism laws is unnecessary. That is also the view of the law enforcement agencies. However, we do need specific and targeted measures, which is why I intend to introduce an emergency anti-terrorism Bill. I am determined to strike a balance between respecting our fundamental civil liberties and ensuring that they are not exploited.

Through those measures, we will reinforce action against the perpetrators of organised crime, drugs and people trafficking. Therefore, in the next few days we will introduce separate measures in the Proceeds of Crime Bill, which will now be complemented by anti-terrorist legislation. Terrorists use organised crime and trade in human misery to finance their activities. The tough new financial controls in the emergency Bill will help us to staunch the flow of terrorist funding.

The emergency legislation will build on the provisions of the Proceeds of Crime Bill to deal specifically with terrorist finance through monitoring and freezing the accounts of suspected terrorists. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will spell out in more detail measures on the seizure of cash within this country and strict reporting requirements on the financial institutions. Separately, a new anti-terrorist finance unit is to be established in conjunction with my right hon. Friend under the auspices of the National Criminal Intelligence Service.

The events of 11 September have led to a new determination to co-operate at European and international level. Terrorists do not respect national boundaries. In line with the Europe-wide endeavour, I intend to include in the emergency Bill an enabling power to allow implementation by affirmative order of measures from the Justice and Home Affairs Council on police and judicial co-operation.

Regrettably, there are those who are prepared to exploit the tensions created by the global threat. Racists, bigots, and hotheads, as well as those associating with terrorists, are prepared to use the opportunity to stir up hate. It is therefore my intention to introduce new laws to ensure that incitement to religious, as well as racial, hatred will become a criminal offence. I also intend to increase the current two-year maximum penalty to seven years.

I am examining wider powers in relation to incitement by people in the United Kingdom, against groups or individuals overseas. I am also examining additional powers in relation to conspiracy. None of those measures is intended to stifle free speech, dialogue, or debate. Fair comment is not at risk, only the incitement to hate.

Obtaining good intelligence and being able to target and track potential terrorists is essential. We need comprehensive powers to require best practice to become the norm. This legislation will therefore facilitate the exchange of information in two key areas. It will ensure that law enforcement agencies can access vital information on passengers and freight. It will also enable customs and revenue officers to pass information to the police. These provisions will remove barriers which currently prevent the exchange of information in the fight against terrorism. These will be carefully targeted measures designed to protect the public, not affecting the privacy of law-abiding citizens.

We will introduce measures to enable communication service providers to retain data generated in the course of their business, by which I mean the recording of calls made and other data, not the content. We will work with the industry on a code of practice. I wish to thank those who have co-operated so well over the past five weeks in the industry.

I think that we all accept that there is a compelling need for more effective powers to exclude and remove suspected terrorists from our country. We rightly pride ourselves on the safe haven that we offer to those genuinely fleeing terror. But our moral obligation and love of freedom does not extend to offering hospitality to terrorists. That is why, both in the emergency terrorism Bill and in a separate extradition measure, I will ensure that we have robust and streamlined procedures.

I believe that it will be possible to achieve these changes without substantial alteration to the Human Rights Act 1998. Nevertheless, it may well be necessary, using article 15, to derogate from article 5 of the European convention. That would allow the detention of foreign nationals whom we intend to remove from the country, and who are considered a threat to national security. This would occur in circumstances falling outside those permitted by article 5 of the European convention on human rights, but within the scope of article 1f of the 1951 refugee convention.

I am also looking to take power to deny substantive asylum claims to those who are suspected of terrorist associations, and to streamline the existing judicial review procedures while retaining the right of appeal. Appropriate safeguards would apply to any such derogation.

A review of extradition procedure had been undertaken by the Government before 11 September. I intend to bring forward a separate substantive measure to modernise and place our laws in the context of the new international situation. Streamlining, while retaining rights of appeal, will form part of this measure. I also intend, following an announcement to the House in the weeks ahead, to modernise our nationality and asylum system.

There are four other measures to which I wish to refer today. The first, which relates to the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, will strengthen

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security at airports and for passengers. Powers both within restricted areas at airports and aboard aircraft will all be strengthened.

In addition, I can announce that we will expand the role and jurisdiction of the British Transport police, together with those working on enforcement from the Ministry of Defence and the Atomic Energy Authority. We will ask the House to agree to widen their powers beyond the boundaries of particular sites. I am also seeking powers to provide the police and customs services with the authority to demand the removal of facial covering or gloves. That is a basic requirement to enable identification where finger printing or other biometric tests are important.

I am also including in the Bill clauses on nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological materials, generally described as weapons of mass destruction, which will cover the intention to use, produce, possess or participate in unauthorised transfers of those materials. At the time of the millennium, a great deal of work was undertaken to ensure the security of key utilities. I want to assure the House that both in the Civil Contingencies Committee, and more widely, we have examined and put in place further work to update our preparedness, preventive action and remedial steps, should they be necessary.

The United Kingdom has some of the world's best counter-terrorist expertise. Working together with international partners, we are taking every step to protect ourselves. Those plans are continually reviewed and tested. There is no immediate intelligence pointing to a specific threat to the United Kingdom, but we remain alert, domestically as well as internationally.

I know that many in the House will agree that strengthening our democracy and reinforcing our values is as important as the passage of new laws. If, therefore, we do not rise to the challenge and provide through our democratic institutions the commitment and will to face down terrorists, our economy, social well-being and quality of life will suffer. The legislative measures which I have outlined today will protect and enhance our rights, not diminish them. Justice for individuals and minorities are reaffirmed, and justice for the majority and the security of our nation will be secured.

On 11 September, families lost their loved ones, and the threat of terrorism touched us all. If we fail now to take the necessary action to protect our people, future generations will never forgive us. That is why I am asking for the wholehearted support of both sides of the House in demonstrating that this Parliament, our democracy and our judicial system are capable of rising to the challenge, and of doing so swiftly and effectively.

**Mr. Oliver Letwin** (West Dorset): I should like to thank the Home Secretary for his courtesy in giving us an advance copy of the statement and a briefing. He will be aware that, as far as his principal objectives are concerned, he has our support. Like him, we wish to see changes in our law that will increase the effectiveness of domestic measures against terrorism.

We share the Government's view that legislation is required to increase the effectiveness of our counter-terrorist enforcement. However, does the Home Secretary agree that, too often in the past, over-hasty legislation has proved inoperable in practice? Does he agree that the best guard against that danger is detailed scrutiny, which teases out the implications of the legislation to determine both whether it will be effective and whether it poses any undue threat to our fundamental liberties? Can he assure us that those critical measures at this critical time will be debated in detail on the Floor of the House? Is he aware that we will resist using the emergency legislation as a means of addressing problems of law enforcement outside the field of terrorism?

We are delighted that the Home Secretary accepts that the duty of Parliament in a crisis of the kind that we now face is to maintain a careful balance between public safety and individual freedom. We welcome his agreement that public safety demands changes to the law that will enable him to refuse entry to those foreign nationals whom he judges a risk to national security. But does he agree that he also needs to be able to remove such dangerous individuals from this country if they are already here?

In the light of the Chahal case, the Singh and Singh case and other jurisprudence associated with the European convention on human rights and the Human Rights Act, does the Home Secretary accept that such removal of dangerous individuals poses a significant legislative problem? Does he accept that the internment or indefinite detention powers that he signalled in his statement today may not provide a workable means of avoiding that problem? Will he confirm the view taken by his predecessor that Parliament can legislate to alter the effect of the Human Rights Act?

With reference to laws against incitement to religious hatred, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that although the whole House will wholeheartedly agree with his desire to protect vulnerable communities—and in particular, vulnerable Muslim communities during the present crisis—the Opposition will need to be persuaded that the drafting of the legislation will achieve this admirable effect without, as he so rightly said, curtailing proper freedom of speech?

Turning to the proposed EU framework directives, does the Home Secretary share our view that there is a fundamental difference between the proposed directive on combating terrorism and the proposed directive on European arrest warrants? We all support the principle of the proposed directive on combating terrorism. That will force other EU counties to adopt legislation parallel to our Terrorism Act 2000. But does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we certainly should not let the current crisis drive us into abandoning either the principle of habeas corpus or the principle of a person being presumed innocent until proven guilty?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the proposed directive on European arrest warrants might threaten those principles? Does he acknowledge that many of us, in all parts of the House, will have very grave concerns about implementing those directives through affirmative orders? Does he agree that there should be urgent review by the Scrutiny Committee?

Does the Home Secretary recognise the strength of the case for introducing sunset clauses to legislation in all these difficult areas, so that the House, and Parliament as a whole, can have the opportunity with the benefit of hindsight regularly to reassess both the effectiveness of the legislation and its effect on individual freedom?

We will engage constructively with the Government as the legislation proceeds, but we shall perform the proper role of an Opposition under these circumstances—probing, inquiring and bringing likely effects to light. Let us hope that the combined efforts of all of us in this House and in the other place will be sufficient to produce a rarity in British legislative history—fast law that is also good law.

**Mr. Blunkett:** I welcome the hon. Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin) to his new Front-Bench portfolio. I look forward to the sort of brief but robust exchanges that I had with his predecessor, but perhaps at a lower pitch than was usual then. I welcome the general principle of the hon. Gentleman's approach, although I should hate to be opposite him on a day when he was facing down legislation, rather than welcoming it.

We are not intent on taking away rights or denying people normal opportunities through judicial process, but we are endeavouring to respond to the new situation. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, with the agreement of the Leader of the House, we will look to take the legislation on the Floor of the House. We want to ensure that the areas that are identified with the Opposition as being key for debate have sufficient time allocated to them to allow proper debate, in order to reassure the entire House and the public outside that we have achieved the right balance between the need to act swiftly and the ability to draw up legislation that will be lasting.

I am happy to consider reaffirmation of aspects of the Bill that will be identified as we take the legislation through the House. That seems sensible in the case of emergency legislation. I am also prepared to consider proposals from the Opposition as well as from Labour Members that would enhance or improve what we are doing.

It is worth spending a moment on the points that the hon. Gentleman raised in relation to two matters, which are different but related. The first concerns extradition where we have treaty agreements with other countries and where it is possible in all present circumstances to extradite those who are required for due trial. The second concerns people whom we are seeking to eject from our country although they have not committed a crime here, but whose deportation would be desirable, given the threat that we believe they pose.

On the first matter, we have very clear treaties with main partner countries. There is no problem—indeed, there has been no problem—under section 11 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 in relation to our European partners. There would be no problem on arrest warrants either, because to carry out an arrest is not to deny someone fair trial or to presume them guilty before trial has taken place; it is to respect mutual recognition of our judicial and policing systems throughout the European Union—something that goes back a long way, but which has taken a long time to recognise and to get through the system.

Deportation, like preventing people who are feared to be terrorists and who are travelling through our country from claiming asylum, is another matter. It seems to us that when a third safe country cannot be found, holding such people—with proper rights of appeal and the opportunity for a return to their case—is preferable to sending them back to certain death when their guilt has not been ascertained. We are not, therefore, seeking to withdraw from or deratify the ECHR, which would be necessary in terms of denying article 3. As I said, we may derogate from article 5, while continuing to hold to article 1f of the refugee convention, in order to have the ability better to protect ourselves while protecting appeal rights.

The speeding up of judicial review in both processes will be absolutely crucial. It is absurd that it can take five, seven or even 10 years, as happened in one case, to extradite someone from this country. That is not justice; it is playing monkey business with our judicial framework and processes.

I can assure the House that we have thought long and hard. We have not rushed into these measures. In the next few weeks, there will be time to contemplate as well as to scrutinise the legislation that we are introducing. We want to get it right because we have obligations to our own people and to our international requirements. If we can get it right, we will have managed to sweep away some of the nonsense that has been found in recent weeks to exist in our system. I appeal to our judiciary to work with us to ensure that democracy in all its guises can operate fairly and openly, rather than be held up to ridicule by those who should be upholding it.

**Mr. Chris Mullin** (Sunderland, South): I am sure that all sensible people will welcome any new measures intended to make our dealing with terrorism more effective, but I should like to underline the point made by the hon. Member for West Dorset (Mr. Letwin): there is a long history of anti-terrorism legislation being introduced in haste and repented at leisure. We will need time properly to scrutinise whatever measures my right hon. Friend puts before the House. I welcome the fact that the measures are being introduced after mature consideration and not in the immediate aftermath of the terrible events of 11 September.

On the new definition of terrorism proposed by the Commission, has my right hon. Friend noticed that, under proposed article 5.3, sanctions such as community service for alleged terrorists are listed? The EC may be proposing to cast the net a little wide. Will he ensure that whatever definition is finally agreed is robust, watertight and confined to dealing with terrorists and not with the other people who might, from time to time, get up the noses of the established order?

My right hon. Friend mentioned the need to deny asylum to those suspected of having terrorist associations. What level of evidence will be required and who will assess that evidence? Finally, he said that he was examining additional powers in relation to conspiracy. Will he give us a clue about what is in his mind in that respect?

**Mr. Blunkett:** I welcome my hon. Friend's approach of wanting to ensure that we get it right, and not just quickly. I am a great enthusiast for active citizenship, but I had not envisaged engaging terrorists in good works in our community as a suitable punishment in Sheffield or Sunderland. I am therefore happy to affirm that we shall take appropriate and proportionate measures, and press them on our European partners.

We are looking with the Crown Prosecution Service to examine ways in which those who are not directly engaged in fundraising, organising or inciting by

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pronouncement may be involved in conspiracy by supporting or succouring those who are engaged in terrorism. The question of conspiracy would come into play in the case of people who had been engaged, as is alleged about some of those who are currently held throughout the world, in facilitating terrorism through training, providing goods and services or engaging in communication networks with those involved in terrorist activity. I am working with the Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor on the best way of tackling that.

**Simon Hughes** (Southwark, North and Bermondsey): I thank the Home Secretary for his statement and briefings. He can rest assured that the Liberal Democrats will support the Government when they introduce well considered legislation, which is necessary in the current emergency, and targeted specifically at tackling terrorism. However, if the legislation is not immediately necessary and has nothing to do with terrorism, Liberal Democrats will defend the liberties of the individual citizen robustly. I anticipate that that applies to other quarters in the House as well.

Let me ask about process. Will a draft Bill be presented as early as possible? If so, we can ensure that we try to get it right as soon as possible. Will the Home Secretary undertake to consult the Joint Committee on Human Rights early to ensure that there are no breaches of our human rights obligations, not only in the Government's view but in that of all parties in both Houses? Will he follow the provisions in previous legislation for emergency powers to have limited time effects whenever possible, and to continue only if Parliament agrees?

The statement contained a surprising element: the implication that European legislation could get through both Houses of Parliament, without proper debate and scrutiny, simply on the basis of an affirmative order proposed by the Government. It is most important that the Home Secretary confirm that he did not mean that. It is not acceptable to any hon. Member, even ardent Europeans, because legislation should come through this place, not by a Minister putting a yes or no question to Parliament.

On human rights, will the Home Secretary confirm that he will try to avoid derogation from the European convention whenever possible? Does he seriously propose to bring back internment throughout the United Kingdom? One of his suggestions could be interpreted to mean that.

On asylum, will the right hon. Gentleman make it absolutely clear that he will uphold the 1951 convention and that all who have a right under it to seek asylum and put their case here will retain it after the legislation is enacted? Will he make sure that, on controversial matters such as human rights and asylum, there will always be the opportunity for a judicial review of Ministers' and officials' decisions, and that no one will be precluded from going to court to challenge a decision by the Executive?

Incitement to racial hatred is an important issue. I share with the Home Secretary and others the view that its prevention should not restrict the right to criticise other faiths or people and views of other faiths. What has happened to the Government's proposal to introduce an equality Bill to guarantee equality of all faiths? Legislation on incitement to racial hatred has existed for 15 years, but barely a prosecution has occurred. Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect on the fact that legislation is pointless if it is never implemented?

Lastly, the Home Secretary rightly paid tribute to the emergency services. We join him in that tribute, but can he assure police services and police authorities throughout the country that they will have the resources that they need to implement the additional measures, and that the civil defence measures are sufficiently resourced and in place? If there is a need to deal with the threat of weapons of mass destruction, are we safe between now and the end of the legislative process or will he introduce other measures to ensure that action is taken immediately against any such terrorist threat?

**Mr. Blunkett:** My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and I will discuss the question of resourcing, but I can make it clear that all necessary practical measures will be in place before the legislation reaches the statute book.

The human rights questions that the hon. Gentleman raised can be answered in the affirmative. Yes, we shall consult the Joint Committee. Yes, we are party to the 1951 convention, as I spelled out. We do not intend to introduce internment, although if a major crisis arose from the terrorist threat, other specific measures would have to be introduced, as has been the case since the second world war. Governments have always held that in reserve.

On the question of secondary legislation, I did not know that it had ever been Liberal Democrat policy that every single measure agreed at European level required primary legislation in the House. It certainly has not been since we joined the European Union and signed the treaty of Rome in 1972. Affirmative and negative orders as well as the European Scrutiny Committee have been used for such measures. I had thought that affirmative orders, which offer the opportunity for debate on the Floor of the House, provided a much more positive way to deal with such matters than do other measures.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to think again, because we shall grind our own legislative procedures to a standstill and make a nonsense of our partnership in Europe if we do not accept that secondary legislation is required. The matter involves the specific terms that I have laid down, not any old issue at any time, and it is important that we reaffirm that.

I have dealt with the question of seeking co-operation. I cannot guarantee that we shall be able to publish a draft Bill, because of the speed at which we are trying to act, but I shall engage the opposition parties and those in the House with a particular interest as quickly and effectively as I can.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The House will understand that there are three other statements to be made. Short questions will allow the Home Secretary to give a short reply, which would be a great help.

**Ms Joan Walley** (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I broadly welcome the proposals that the Home Secretary has brought to the House, but may I press him further on the nuclear, biological and chemical issues to which he referred? Does he intend to provide a statutory basis for

emergency planning, and will he consult the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health on how the measures will be drawn up before the legislation is debated here?

**Mr. Blunkett:** I am happy to give the assurance that we shall consult. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs has been doing sterling work on the civil contingencies side of our operation and we want to ensure that we consult such groups.

On my hon. Friend's first question, it came as a surprise that although the Chemical Weapons Act 1996 gives substantial powers in relation to the movement, possession and use of chemicals, we have not done the same in the areas that I have outlined, in particular radiological aspects. Irrespective of what happened on 11 September, it is time that we had those powers in place. We have the opportunity to move quickly on the measures, some of which were in preparation, and they can be put in place speedily at this timely moment.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke** (Rushcliffe): While we all wish to reserve the right to scrutinise in detail this massive legislation, may I welcome the Home Secretary's announcement about tackling the problems of extradition? I well remember expressing my frustration about them when I held his office because of the archaic procedures and protracted litigation that often occurs.

Although the right hon. Gentleman may have to confine fast-track emergency legislation to terrorist offences, does he accept that there is an extremely good case for tackling the problem of extradition in almost all serious offences? There is no good reason why people accused of serious violence or serious organised crime should not speedily be returned to the jurisdiction of any country that respects the rule of law to face serious charges. Will he try to maintain progress on a Europe-wide arrest warrant, so long as all member states have satisfactory safeguards on personal liberty and the due process of law?

Finally, does the right hon. Gentleman propose to remove the Home Secretary's role in extradition cases? Although that sounds attractive, in practice it encourages people to raise political issues and bring political lobbying to bear on him and those who hold similar office in other jurisdictions, which can have most unfortunate and delaying consequences.

**Mr. Blunkett:** I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his supportive words. I hope that the European arrest warrant will be dealt with by the beginning of December at the Laeken Council. It will then be possible to make sense of something that is not always operated in the best interests of speed or justice. That will iron out some of the issues that I have read about—Julian Knowles' article in, I think, *The Daily Telegraph* was about a case in Portugal—and enable us to deal with these matters sensitively and sensibly.

I agree that there is a good case for examining the withdrawal of the Home Secretary's role from areas where, otherwise, judicial review would be used as a deliberate delaying tactic, without new evidence or new presentation but with the ability to challenge at each stage of the process. As a former Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know how difficult it is for a Home Secretary to give up any power.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The whole House welcomes the burden of the Home Secretary's statement. As a Hackney MP representing a large Muslim community, I welcome the thinking behind the proposed legislation against incitement to religious hatred, which is designed to check the disgusting and racist attacks on individual Muslims and the Muslim faith. Does my right hon. Friend accept that, because others in Hackney take their religion—or even their lack of religion—extremely seriously, such legislation must not cut across genuine debate?

On the speeding up of extradition and related matters, the House welcomes the legislation in outline. However, I represent many people who have genuinely fled from torture and oppression, and the burden of proof in these matters will be very important. We would not want the process to be so speeded up and robust that people were returned to torture and perhaps death.

**Mr. Blunkett:** It certainly would not be my wish, either, that we returned people to torture and death. That would contravene the conventions that were mentioned a few moments ago. I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that she seeks in relation to free speech, dialogue, debate and attitude. What we are dealing with, in changing the law on race and religion, is hatred. I take the inference of her intervention, so I shall examine carefully the question of atheists and—I say this wryly—consider whether unpleasant and unhelpful comments about atheists could be included.

**Mr. Edward Garnier** (Harborough): Can the Home Secretary tell us today whether the new legislation on incitement to racial hatred will include either a definition of religion or a list of those religions against which it will be illegal to incite hatred?

**Mr. Blunkett:** It is not our intention to include in the Bill a definition of religion, for all the reasons that many in the House will be familiar with. The Attorney-General and I would wish to assure ourselves that we were handling the matter sensitively, bearing in mind the fact that the existing law in relation to race provides for those religions that have a direct relationship with the race of the individual concerned. We want to extend that facility to people who follow Islam and Christianity. The measures will also enable us to deal with those who deliberately use the current law to stir up dissension and hate, which we would all find unacceptable.

I am examining why existing law has been used so infrequently—in the past decade about four prosecutions a year have been successful—and whether, in conjunction with the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, we should be slightly more robust in what we do about those who, in writing or in speech, deliberately cause hate in our community.

**Fiona Mactaggart** (Slough): Is not this the wrong end of the equation? We have a law against racial discrimination, which was followed by a law against incitement to racial hatred. Perhaps the best way to deal with this issue is to prohibit religious discrimination rather than start with a prohibition on incitement. Has my right hon. Friend considered doing that?

**Mr. Blunkett:** A long debate about discrimination as opposed to incitement to hatred arose under the Public Order Act 1986. This legislation and the measures that

*[Mr. Blunkett]*

we are taking are designed to deal with specific circumstances regarding the threat of terrorism and the development of protection against terrorists. We want to avoid the exploitation of the situation domestically. My statement about the proposal was made in that context. We are endeavouring to unify our community, and to avoid divisions and conflict at the very moment when we need that unity most of all.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Rochford and Southend, East): The Home Secretary said that persons who come here from dictatorial and oppressive regimes but who nevertheless promote terrorism will face the option of being detained or going to what he called "a third country." Will he explain how third countries will be approved and selected? Will the Government publish a list of countries that they think are appropriate for housing terrorists?

**Mr. Blunkett:** That was very entertaining. [HON. MEMBERS: "It needs a serious answer."] If hon. Members want a serious answer, I can tell them that we do not need a list of third countries. A person who is not facing extradition from a specific country because of action taken but whom we want to eject from the country would have a choice. He could be deported to a country of his choice or to a country prepared to take him, or he could be detained in this country under the appeals process. Such people would not be charged with a specific terrorist act overseas: they would be suspected of working with and supporting terrorists. We are proposing measures to protect this country from those people. We are interested in ideas about safe third countries if that choice is not available to an individual. If anyone has a smart answer, I should be grateful to hear from them in the morning.

**Ms Bridget Prentice** (Lewisham, East): Like all Members of the House, I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. He will be aware that, as he was speaking, people in the civil liberties lobby were unpicking every word that he said. I ask him to resist that strongly. In a free society, we must take on not only our rights but our responsibilities. Although there must be due scrutiny by the House, some of us believe that there should be an even more robust approach, particularly on judicial review. Will that happen? Most people in this country would agree to sacrifice some of their liberty if it meant greater security.

**Mr. Blunkett:** It is precisely that balance that we intend to secure. Debate in the House and the securing of freedoms through political action must always be preferable to falling back on those who are not elected, who are not accountable and who often cannot respond quickly or sensitively to a particular threat. That is why parliamentary and participatory democracy is the better safeguard, rather than relying on jurisprudence.

**Mr. Robert Key** (Salisbury): Will the Home Secretary explain why he has not taken this opportunity to legislate on mercenary activity? He will recall that we were promised a Green Paper in November last year, and that in April this year the Government regretted that they had not got around to it. Now we see young British men recruited by British citizens to fight for the Taliban, possibly against British service men and women. Should not the Home Secretary now take the opportunity to legislate?

**Mr. Blunkett:** I have known the hon. Gentleman for many years in opposition, so let me be frank with him. No, I did not know that we were thinking of producing a Green Paper, but I will go back and read the material, along with all the other tomes that I have been reading over the past five weeks.

**Mr. David Crausby** (Bolton, North-East): I have visited various mosques in my constituency on recent Fridays, and I have heard from the Muslim community overwhelming condemnation of acts of terror. At the same time, however, there has been a free and frank exchange of views with that community, which has not always been in complete agreement with the Government's tactics. Can the Home Secretary reassure me that the measures will be used in the fight against terrorism and religious hatred, and not against that free and frank exchange of views?

**Mr. Blunkett:** Yes, I can. On my own visits, I too have encountered both support and concern from constituents. We are all in this together, as has been said over and over again in the House by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Defence and Opposition Members. We are in it together because we are all threatened by terrorism. It is indiscriminate—it singles out no religion, no colour, no creed. That is why everyone in this country will need to back, and should back, the measures that we are taking—we are protecting them and their families as well as our own.

**Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory** (Wells): Does the Home Secretary agree that the main lesson from the terror attacks on America was not that existing laws are inadequate, but rather that the security and intelligence services failed to use the existing laws and their powers? Will he be very sceptical about Government agencies and others that demand new intrusion and surveillance powers, and also about the European Union, which has a declared aim of using the existing emergency as a pretext for centralising and advancing its own powers? In presenting his proposals for new laws, will he in each case show that they are required specifically for the struggle against terrorism, that their absence was significantly inhibiting, and that they will be used only in that war on terrorism?

**Mr. Blunkett:** I certainly agree with the first of those three propositions. There would be no point in measures that were not specific to, and helpful in, combating terrorism. I cannot guarantee the implication of the second question, which was, "Would these measures have materially helped to prevent the attack on the World Trade Centre?" Hindsight is a wonderful thing; what we now need to do is learn the lessons—what went wrong, what measures were not in place, what scrutiny had not been carried out and what failures may have existed following the bombings in Dar-es-Salaam and Kenya in 1998—and thereby ensure that we establish measures and facilities that will prevent such terrorist attacks from occurring again. We should not wait until they do occur again, and then say that perhaps we should have taken measures,

including being ready to co-operate with free democracies in the European Union rather than suspecting them of somehow being prepared to use this moment to centralise power. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that what I have encountered in the meetings that I have attended since 11 September is the need to encourage and speed up their processes, not to slow them down.

**Mr. Tom Levitt** (High Peak): Is my right hon. Friend content that the list of proscribed organisations in the Terrorism Act 2000 is appropriate, or does he intend to review it?

**Mr. Blunkett:** The list will be kept up to date. The 14 original organisations, and the additional 21 that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary introduced earlier this year when he was Home Secretary, will be reviewed. What is more, we need to ensure that those who fragment within those organisations, change their name and reconfigure themselves in new forms are dealt with adequately and speedily.

**Mr. Richard Shepherd** (Aldridge-Brownhills): I support the Home Secretary in his intention of getting it right rather than merely acting quickly. How does he square that with the use of affirmative orders? A 90-minute debate on the Floor of the House is hardly an appropriate form of scrutiny of matters that touch on the relationship of citizens to the state and the competence of the state over judicial arrangements.

**Mr. Blunkett:** I am not proposing simply to have 90-minute debates. I am proposing that we have a debate about the nature of the orders that would be consequent on the parent legislation, and that each aspect should then be debated on the Floor of House in a way that has not always been the case for such measures adopted under secondary legislation. We intend to give every opportunity, at a later date, for people to be able to review whether the measures have been effective. The fact that they emanate from co-operation across Europe should be seen as a plus, not a minus, because we want other European countries' co-operation, as much as they need ours, to combat a threat that knows no national boundaries.

**Mr. Paul Marsden** (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I welcome my right hon. Friend's aim of outlawing incitement to religious hatred, but in our headlong rush to protect our democracy there is a real danger that we will forgo basic civil liberties. What, specifically, does he mean by retaining data? I am sure that many businesses are very concerned about what that will involve. Personally, I am concerned about whether it means nosing through private e-mails or steaming open letters.

**Mr. Blunkett:** It explicitly does not mean ferreting through people's private e-mails or steaming open their post. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 is the greatest safeguard that exists in any democracy in the world in its updating of earlier provisions for protecting our rights. Having had this job for four months, I am well aware that that is the case. Great care is taken in these matters.

Being able to find out from service providers—just as we can from telecommunications agencies—whether a phone call was made at a certain time, when we are investigating terrorism, makes sense. Holding that information for a longer period than would otherwise be commercially desirable—it is not information that does not already exist—and reaching agreement with the industry on achieving that, through a code, threatens no one except those who are up to no good.

**Mr. David Cameron** (Witney): Given the recent history of legislation on issues such as asylum and extradition being taken apart by the courts, why is the Home Secretary waiting before deciding whether or how much to amend the Human Rights Act 1998? Is not the history of Home Office legal advice on such matters that if officials think that it might possibly be necessary, it almost certainly will be necessary—so why not do it at once? Could we hear a little more of his thinking on that subject?

**Mr. Blunkett:** Delphically put, if I may say so. I use the word "might" because we want to be absolutely sure when we introduce the legislation that it will be absolutely necessary, in order to achieve our goals, to derogate in the way that I described. I am pretty certain that it will be, given the advice that we have already received and the views of the Attorney-General—but precisely for the reasons that the hon. Gentleman outlined, I want to ensure that we have taken every possible step to get the best legal advice before committing ourselves.

**Geraint Davies** (Croydon, Central): In respect of the Proceeds of Crime Bill, may I ask my right hon. Friend about offshore bank accounts, especially in respect of their access and transparency? It is of widespread concern that the proceeds of crime and drug smuggling—therefore, the funding of terror—are funnelled through offshore bank accounts and, indeed, Swiss bank accounts. I wonder whether he would take a fresh look, in consort with the rest of the international community, at achieving such access.

**Mr. Blunkett:** There are many times when I am very pleased to have my right hon. Friend the Chancellor alongside me, and this afternoon is one of them.

**Mr. Simon Thomas** (Ceredigion): On behalf of the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru, I welcome the Home Secretary's statement. We want to work with the Government and assist them in ensuring that the right legislation is put through the House. To that end, will the right hon. Gentleman agree to work with all parties in the House, not only on the details of the legislation but on the timing and the amount of debate that we will have on the crucial questions that will be asked, such as those that have been asked by many Members today?

The Home Secretary made some important announcements on extradition. Nevertheless, will he now rule out the extradition of individuals from this country to places where they will face the death penalty? Instead, will he work within multilateral agreements to ensure that such individuals can be extradited, but with a different result? Finally, does he accept that despotic Governments use accusations of terrorism against their genuine opponents who are not guilty of terrorism? What safeguards does he envisage in his legislation so that this

*[Mr. Simon Thomas]*

country still provides a safe haven for genuine refugees and for people who oppose terrorism and terrorist Governments?

**Mr. Blunkett:** No genuine refugee has anything to fear from the proposals that I have introduced this afternoon. Those who claim that specialist status, having been picked up on suspicion of terrorist acts or who are in transit through our airports, will still be entitled to go to the Special Immigration Appeals Commission and to appeal to the Court of Appeal, so there is no question of taking away their rights. Speeding up the operation of those rights and not suffering fools gladly is how we intend to proceed. We will consult the minor parties as much as possible on the way in which we proceed in the months ahead.

I think that I have missed one the hon. Gentleman's questions—

**Mr. Thomas:** The death penalty.

**Bob Spink** (Castle Point): The USA.

**Mr. Blunkett:** The hon. Gentleman asked about the death penalty, and the hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) says "the USA". Where we have specific extradition treaties—we would seek to extend them—they already apply in that way. We have had an extradition treaty with the United States since 1976, and only last Thursday we extradited a man called Qadar, who was wanted in the state of New York. The treaty has been working well. There have been no difficulties with it, and I have agreed with the Attorney-General in the US that we will update it—but as with all extradition treaties with other countries, the provisions that we have in place will safeguard that basic acceptance which the House has affirmed on numerous occasions.

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Can I press my right hon. Friend a little further on his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley)? Clearly, his statement is very important in relation to the chemicals sector, whether we are dealing with major hazard sites in manufacture, with transport or with chemicals that could be made for an innocent use but misused in the production of chemical weapons. Will he clarify the situation in relation to the movement of and trade in chemicals? Is he satisfied that his right hon. Friend the Chancellor, who is sitting bedside him, is affording him sufficient resources to address those very serious problems, especially for those who represent the chemicals sector?

**Mr. Blunkett:** The answer is yes, of course, but the industry has an obligation to ensure security and safety—the two go hand in hand—as has the Health and Safety Commission. However, on this occasion the legislation will be primarily intended to prevent those who should not have access to, possess or move such products from being able to do so. I am surprised that we are catching up with such matters late—but of course, as I said earlier, hindsight is a wonderful thing.

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (South Staffordshire): Has the Home Secretary detected the widespread support for his general determination to deal with terrorism? However, has he also detected the real unease across the House about the measure dealing with incitement to racial and religious hatred? Will he bear in mind that hasty legislation—one can cite the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 and the legislation introduced after the Omagh bombing—is often bad legislation? Will he please consult very widely, not just in the House but with Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders, before he comes forward with specific proposals?

**Mr. Blunkett:** I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the leaders of all the denominations and faiths with whom we have spoken over the past five weeks are enthusiastically in favour of this measure. We do not, of course, intend to take any freedom away. The freedom to hate and to use that hate to incite others to take actions that destroy our community cannot be in the best interests of democracy. I also believe that it is crucial, for the reasons that have been referred to earlier, that those who face or have experienced religious hate know and feel that we are on their side and are listening and responding to them. We want them to be part of the anti-terrorist drive and the development of a unified voice here and across the world.

**Mr. Tony McWalter** (Hemel Hempstead): On that point, will my right hon. Friend accept the real concern about some sort of special protection for religion as it might make his task much more difficult? Of course, religious belief generally is of great benefit to our society, but some religious tenets actually promote hate. For example, in Leviticus and Revelations, homosexuality is called an abomination and people are enjoined not to touch a woman at the time she is unclean. It is important that my right hon. Friend understands that although those beliefs have now been marginalised in St. Mary's church in Hemel Hempstead, they are often not marginalised elsewhere. It is vital that those who do not support them speak out against them and are given the freedom so to do.

**Mr. Blunkett:** I have answered one or two questions over the past four and half years during which I have been a Minister but, for once, I am speechless. Suffice it to say that I think that few terrorists have engaged with Leviticus.

**Mr. Mark Prisk** (Hertford and Stortford): The Home Secretary began his statement by saying how important it was to balance the respect for our liberty with the need to prevent its exploitation. Given that fine balance, will he explain to the House his plans for the exchange of information—often private information—within Government agencies? In particular, what safeguards will he put in place to ensure that law-abiding citizens will have nothing to fear?

**Mr. Blunkett:** We have a formidable Data Protection Registrar and we have set in place protections unequalled anywhere in the world in terms of ensuring—correctly—people's right to privacy. We have, of course, to ensure that the methods we use are commensurate with the threat that we face. That is the crunch in terms of getting the balance right. In addition, those who seek to protect us and have information at their disposal which, at present, they may be unable to transfer so that it can be used effectively against that threat, need to know that we are

unlocking that barrier. That is what we are seeking to do, and if we do not do it future generations will simply think that we were fools.

**Mr. Gerald Kaufman** (Manchester, Gorton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that had my hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (Mr. McWalter) been on the receiving end of religious hatred, he might take a less academic view of it?

Is my right hon. Friend also aware that his decision to introduce legislation to turn religious hatred into an offence will be welcomed not only by Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, but by Jews as well? He may well be aware that even in this fevered situation the story has been circulating that the attack on the World Trade Centre was a Jewish plot, with Jews who were working there advised not to go into work on 11 September. Does he therefore accept that if the Bill is to be introduced—I am glad to hear that it will be—the decision to prosecute should be that of the Attorney-General and not that of the Crown Prosecution Service, which recently admitted to institutionalised racism within its ranks?

**Mr. Blunkett:** My right hon. Friend puts his finger on issues as quickly and carefully as ever. The Attorney-General will want to lay down key principles in terms of action, but we will want the CPS to be able to take more decisive action at a local level than has been apparent over the past 17 years.

## Action Against Financing Terrorism

4.36 pm

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gordon Brown):** With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce measures that seek to cut off the supply of funds to terrorism.

Those who finance terror are as guilty as those who commit it, so our response to the funding of terrorist acts must be every bit as clear, as unequivocal and as united as our response to the terrorist acts themselves. The action plan that I am placing in the House of Commons Library, which is now available in the Vote Office, arises from concerted work across Governments, and in particular from decisions of the G7 group of Finance Ministers and Central Bank governors on 6 October. It proposes to tighten our law, further empower the police and strengthen co-ordination across the world.

I can report to the House that having already fully implemented UN Security Council resolutions on the Taliban and on Osama bin Laden, the United Kingdom has now frozen 35 suspect bank accounts, immobilising more than £63 million of suspect terrorist funds. I can also report that by Order in Council, following the latest UN resolution 1373, we have frozen all UK bank accounts associated with the individuals and organisations named in the US Treasury's suspects lists and have already seized in total £180,000 held by those identified in Friday's updated list.

Our UK domestic controls are already among the best in the world, but as part of the emergency anti-terrorism Bill announced this afternoon by the Home Secretary the Government propose a new power to freeze funds when suspicious transactions are under investigation. That will be backed up by new reporting requirements on financial institutions so that they must disclose not only known transactions destined for terrorism, but transactions where there are grounds for suspicion.

Clearly, a balance has to be struck between individuals' right to privacy and their security at a time of increased risk, but we believe that there is a case for new powers for the police to monitor accounts that may be used to facilitate terrorism; for Customs to be allowed, where there are suspicions, to seize cash not only at our borders, as it can now, but within the UK as well; for the Inland Revenue and Customs where applicable to share information and co-operate more effectively with the police; and for the Treasury to freeze assets where there is a clear risk to safety and security.

We do this not least because of the weight of evidence concerning the finances of bin Laden and the al-Qaeda organisation, which is complex but becoming clearer daily. It is not primarily bin Laden's personal wealth that supports the Taliban and active terrorist operations, but the profits from the drugs trade and other businesses, and from individual and company sponsors. That money is channelled through a range of financial centres across the globe, with evidence already pointing to centres in the Gulf, Pakistan and central Asia and to money laundering through an established underground banking system. The cells that form part of the wider al-Qaeda network are often self-financing, possibly using business fronts and crime to sustain themselves. Unravelling that relies on first-rate co-ordination.

*[Mr. Gordon Brown]*

Since 11 September, the security services, police, special branch and Customs and Excise—co-ordinated by the National Criminal Intelligence Service—as well as our armed forces, have worked together to track down terrorist finance, and I believe that the whole House will wish to express its gratitude to them.

To enhance those efforts, we now propose to establish and fund within NCIS a new multi-agency terrorist finance unit, fully supported by additional special branch investigative resources. To improve financial intelligence further, a new taskforce will bring to the anti-terrorism effort the best of academic, financial and commercial expertise, using in particular the best skills of forensic accountancy in tracking assets. It will also investigate underground banking, which is often used for legitimate purposes such as remitting earnings to families and communities far away, but is also known to provide very easy means for criminals and terrorists to conceal the laundering of money and its movement around the world.

Bureaux de change are another network by which money can be laundered and transferred. In the past 18 months, Customs and Excise has charged 89 people in connection with laundering £590 million. That is just a start. In the consultation document that we are publishing today, we therefore propose the implementation from 12 November of a new regime of supervision to ensure the compliance of bureaux with money-laundering regulations, and we will consult on a registration charge. To make easier the tracing and tracking of criminal and terrorist assets, we are also consulting on a new requirement for proper disclosure of beneficial ownership of companies.

Large financial centres all over the world have an important part to play in cutting off the supply of terrorist funding. I am able to tell the House that many of the measures that we are bringing forward are to be replicated throughout UK Crown dependencies and overseas territories. They will be announcing their own plans to introduce appropriate equivalent measures.

The G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank governors met in Washington on 6 October and concluded that a special plenary of the international financial action taskforce would meet later this month to agree the imposition, enforcement and monitoring of new international standards to combat terrorist finance. Our Government are also pressing for the UN to establish a permanent monitoring and enforcement unit for those standards; for the International Monetary Fund to provide the expert help that many countries need to set up economic crime units; and for the early ratification of the European Union second money-laundering directive and the international convention on the suppression of the financing of terrorism.

At international meetings, G7 Ministers also had a chance to review the current state of the world economy. We expressed solidarity with the United States Government and the whole of the USA after the tragic events of 11 September and agreed that the global economic challenge demanded a global response.

Not only have interest rates been brought down worldwide, but the central banks of America, the euro area, Japan and Britain have made clear their determination to take any necessary further action. Oil prices, which have previously risen in times of trouble, have fallen in the past month. We will continue to work with the oil-producing countries to ensure steadiness of supply and prices. Where markets have failed, as in airline insurance, Governments throughout Europe and America have acted together, with a new short-term insurance guarantee.

These remain uncertain and testing times. As Governments and Finance Ministers work together, every one of us is conscious of the human consequences of economic uncertainty, especially concerns about employment. Since 11 September, the world has acted together decisively to seek to maintain the conditions for stability and growth. The Government's assessment of the current state of the economy and our forecasts for next year will be published next month in the pre-Budget report for full discussion in the House.

If fanaticism is the heart of modern terrorism, finance is its lifeblood, and I believe that the whole House will agree on the need to move expeditiously to cut off the supply of terrorist finance. Once again, the House is demonstrating its unity and determination, standing firm, as one, to cut off all means of support to terrorism.

**Mr. Michael Howard** (Folkestone and Hythe): First, I express my gratitude to the Chancellor for the advance indication that he gave me of the contents of his statement.

I welcome the statement and the measures that the Chancellor has described. Draining the financial lifeblood of terrorism is as important a contribution to its defeat as any other measure we can take. The Chancellor will therefore have the full support of the Opposition for any appropriate action that he takes to achieve that aim.

We particularly welcome the recognition that whereas money laundering is about making dirty money clean, much of the financial support for terrorism comes, as the Chancellor made plain, from business activity of one kind or another—some of it apparently legitimate. Does he agree that a recognition of that distinction should be at the heart of our approach, and that simply building on existing laws against money laundering may not prove to be the right course?

Although we welcome the inquiry that the Chancellor has announced into what he described as underground banking, does he accept that any problems caused by that system will not be limited to this country? What assessment has he made of the extent to which the use of the system in other countries has implications for the financing of terrorism? What action, if any, is being taken in respect of that activity in those countries?

Will the Chancellor assure us that any new requirements that he intends to introduce will be straightforward and comprehensible to those who have to implement them? Does he agree that there has too often been confusion about what the banks are supposed to do? Does he agree that, if his approach is to be effective, there can be no room for ambiguity about the responsibilities of the banks?

This morning's edition of *The Times* says:

"The Home Office and the Treasury were unclear yesterday as to precisely how their responsibilities for the anti-terrorism measures were divided."

Has clarity now been introduced into that confusion? Finally, what progress, if any, has been made in the investigation of share movements in the days leading up to 11 September, which caused such widespread concern?

We shall scrutinise the detail of the Chancellor's measures when they become available, with a view to ensuring that Britain has legislation that does not merely adorn the statute book, but works effectively to make a real difference in our efforts to protect those to whom we are accountable, and others across the world, from the appalling consequences of terrorist acts.

**Mr. Brown:** I welcome the shadow Chancellor to his new responsibilities. From his experience as Home Secretary, he brings to the post a knowledge of terrorist activities and how to deal with them. I am grateful to him for what he has said this afternoon. I should have preferred to have this debate with him under different circumstances, but I am pleased that he has been able to support the measures that we have announced today.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman is right that the financing of terrorism is distinct from simple money laundering. Money from legitimate sources can go to an illegal destination to support terrorism. It is precisely for that reason that we have called back into action the international financial action taskforce, which made 40 recommendations on how to deal with the issues of money laundering.

We are now asking the taskforce to deal with the vexed question of the financing of terrorism. I believe that it will introduce an international standard that all countries will be asked to follow. I also believe that international institutions will be prepared to help countries that do not immediately have the resources or expertise to implement such measures, particularly through the creation of economic crime units. I therefore assure the right hon. and learned Gentleman that we are taking seriously the distinction between money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

On the investigation into underground banking, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is absolutely right to point out that such banking is not exclusive to Britain. Indeed, it is more prevalent in many other countries. Once the taskforce has examined the issue, with the expertise that we hope can be brought to bear from not just the public but the private sector, we will share with other countries the results of that review. We are determined to co-operate with other countries in asset tracking, so that we can identify the sources from which terrorism is financed.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be introducing the legislation. The economic crime unit will be part of NCIS, which is under my right hon. Friend's authority. The measure in the Bill that will be of interest to the banks and financial institutions is the obligation to report to the proper authorities any reasonable suspicion that funding could be used for terrorist activities. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman, a former Home Secretary, rightly said, previous legislation left some grounds for ambiguity. There can be no doubt now that any financial institution which has a reasonable suspicion that money is being used to fund terrorist activity is under a clear obligation to report that to NCIS. Investigative action will then be taken as a result.

Finally, the right hon. and learned Gentleman asked about the review of share movements in the period before 11 September. He will have noted that the Financial Services Authority has investigated the matter and issued a statement, but investigations are taking place throughout the world. I have spoken to the head of the Bundesbank in Germany, to the Federal Reserve bank and to the Bank of Japan; all are investigating the matter. Any conclusions that can be made will be brought before the House. The matter is obviously serious and we are determined to investigate it fully.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): When my right hon. Friend gets back to his office in the Treasury, will he ask his officials to produce a file—a very long file—which resulted from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's 1999 visit to Peru? The file is on drugs money laundering, in particular the immensely complex issue of anonymous numbered bank accounts. No one in their right mind thinks that there is any simple answer to that problem, but it has gained added importance, especially in view of the pressure—to which my right hon. Friend referred—on the United Nations in respect of a permanent monitoring unit. Such a unit—I cannot imagine who is resisting it—might give us some hope that the problem of anonymous numbered bank accounts will be addressed.

**Mr. Brown:** Yes, I will ask my officials to show me the papers to which my hon. Friend refers. He is absolutely right: the laundering of drugs money is a major problem on all continents and we need far better enforcement. I believe that the events of 11 September have given new urgency to efforts to deal with the problem.

My hon. Friend might have seen the performance and innovation unit report, published through the Cabinet Office a few months ago, which identified the scale of the money lost as a result of the drugs business. I assure him that we shall deal with those issues and that we shall continue to press for the UN monitoring unit.

**Matthew Taylor** (Truro and St. Austell): The whole House agrees that those who choose to finance terrorism are as loathsome as, and perhaps even more cowardly than, those who undertake terrorist acts of the kind that we have witnessed in the past month. We strongly welcome the Chancellor's attempt to tackle, to track down and to prosecute such individuals both here and internationally, but I have some questions relating specifically to his proposals.

Will the Chancellor make it clear that the laws on monitoring and freezing of bank accounts and extending new powers to the police will require reasonable grounds linked specifically to suspicion of terrorism or other illegal activities, and that court approval will be needed, perhaps in accordance with rules similar to those that already cover phone tapping?

NCIS already has a substantial number of disclosures, but I understand that currently few are investigated owing to lack of resources. Is the Chancellor confident that there will be—and is he able to tell the House about—increased resources for NCIS? Also, as it is not an executive body, will similarly increased resources be given to the Metropolitan police anti-terrorism unit so that it can pursue prosecutions? The PIU in the Cabinet Office has already identified that this country carries out a far smaller number of prosecutions than other countries such as the United States and Italy.

Can the Chancellor outline the Government's position on any action against non-compliant countries following the recommendations of the financial action taskforce,

*[Matthew Taylor]*

which said that members—compliant countries—should apply counter-measures to non-compliant countries by 30 September 2001? Were any measures applied and—perhaps more important—do the Government intend to apply any measures to non-compliant countries?

The Government have already said that they will take action on bribery of foreign Governments. Will similar action be taken against bribery of non-Government individuals and bodies? That is a route through which organisations that may ultimately engage in terrorism may raise funds.

Having promised action on money exchanges, do the Government intend to examine other routes through which such money is often laundered? The FSA has identified spread betting, financial advisers, online broking and credit unions as examples of those. It will be a difficult task, but if the Government are planning to tackle one or two routes, they must tackle them all if action is to be effective.

We shall support Government measures and I hope that the Chancellor will be able to reassure the House on the issues that we are considering.

**Mr. Brown:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I talked to him this morning, as I did to the shadow Chancellor, about the detail of the measures that we are proposing.

In his first set of questions, the hon. Gentleman rightly spoke of getting the balance right between the civil liberties that it is our duty to defend in advance, and the need for security felt by people in the United Kingdom. I believe that the proposal that we are bringing forward gets the balance right. There will be every opportunity to debate the issue of police powers to investigate bank accounts. We intend that this will be done only where there is reasonable suspicion. We intend also that, where possible, this should go through the courts. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we intend to work closely with the financial institutions in implementing this procedure.

The hon. Gentleman is right about NCIS. Thousands of reports are produced each year, which are passed on for further investigation by the police. It is generally accepted, not only in Britain but in America and elsewhere, that so far we have lacked the asset-tracking skills that would allow us to get to the source of funding for those who are engaged in terrorism. We intend to give NCIS and the economic crime unit that particular expertise and additional funding. We intend also that a taskforce will be set up that will bring in private and academic expertise where that is applicable. We have already had discussions with some private sector organisations. Special branch investigative resources will be increased.

The hon. Gentleman asked about tax reliefs. I should point out that it is illegal to claim tax relief for corrupt activities. The problem has been that in other jurisdictions subsidiary companies that are not British companies have claimed tax relief for the payment of bribes to officials. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the new legislation that we propose will extend the requirement that no tax relief can be given not only to Government or public officials, but to anybody in the private sector and to anyone else who receives money for corrupt activities. The law will be improved and cleaned up in that way.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about spread betting and a range of other activities that may be the subject of money laundering. What those activities have in common is that usually they involve cash transactions, which are difficult to monitor. The FSA takes responsibility for examining the betting industry. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that as a result of a recent report that it has produced, the FSA intends to take further action. I can assure him also that in all the areas that he raised with me both this morning and now, we shall take whatever action is necessary.

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton): I welcome the initiatives that my right hon. Friend has so quickly taken in the past few days. Has he any proposals to strengthen the oversight powers of the FSA so that it can find and publicly name individuals who are involved in money laundering? May I seek reassurance that there will remain the closest contact with the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the British dependent territories to ensure consistency of approach so that they do not act in any way differently from the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Brown:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who chairs the Treasury Select Committee. I welcome him to his new post.

The FSA assumes all its powers in a month's time. In my view, it will have powers to deal with the matters that he has raised. If it needs additional powers to do so, we can consider that.

My hon. Friend referred to dependent territories and overseas dependencies. It has been a source of concern for many years that there are gaps in the law in those countries that prevent us from dealing with money laundering and, in this case, the financing of terrorism. I am pleased that, particularly over the past few weeks, there has been far greater contact with those countries, which are now willing to introduce laws similar to ours. Many of them have money-laundering laws, but they will now introduce laws that will enable them to do as we are doing and try to cut off the supply of funds for terrorism. I therefore believe that we will be able to take further action in that area.

As for naming countries, which was the second point made by my hon. Friend, the financial action taskforce will name countries that do not meet the regulations. In reply to the point made by the Liberal spokesman, the hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor), it will consider what action to take when it meets on 29 October.

**Mr. Andrew MacKay** (Bracknell): Will the Chancellor confirm that the legislation will apply to Northern Ireland? Does he accept that a series of measures, which were meant to deal with the funding and financing of paramilitaries, both republican and so-called loyalist in the Province, have singularly failed? What assurances can he give the House that on this occasion it will be different?

**Mr. Brown:** In many ways, the legislation that has been applied to Northern Ireland is now being applied to the whole mainland to deal with the finance of terrorism. The right hon. Gentleman raised issues which I know are of concern, particularly in the United States of America,

which has said that it is introducing new laws to tackle the finance of terrorism. However, it is for its authorities to administer them. As for the United Kingdom, we continue to do everything in our power to cut off the supply of funds to terrorist organisations, whoever they are.

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): I am sure that the whole House welcomes the measures outlined by my right hon. Friend. Is he aware that at a recent meeting of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly the deputy director of Interpol's agency on organised crime told delegates about the bin Laden connection in the financing of the KLA, before and during the war in Kosovo, and before the war in Bosnia, via the Balkans route and the trafficking of arms, women and drugs. Can we have a full inquiry into the activities of the KLA, now renamed the Kosovo Protection Corps, where it gets its finances from and the organised crime in which it is currently engaged?

**Mr. Brown:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who asked about a particular organisation. I can assure her that we shall get the authorities to look at it. On her more general point about bin Laden's funding and the funds that the al-Qaeda organisation amasses from a number of activities, we shall continue to examine in detail how those funds are acquired and try to cut them off at source.

**Mr. John Redwood** (Wokingham): When the Chancellor said that our recent interest rate cut was co-ordinated with other countries, did he mean the Treasury requested the Bank of England to take that action or that the Bank of England decided independently to go beyond its normal remit and timing for those changes? I am not against the change; I would just like to know the process by which it took place.

**Mr. Brown:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for raising the matter of interest rates so that I can put him right. The individual authorities—the Bank of England, the Federal Reserve bank and the European Central Bank—make their own decisions about interest rates. I know that many Opposition Members resisted our decision to make the Bank of England independent, but it is independent and makes its own decisions.

I was referring to what I thought and feel able comment on; everybody here should be able to do that. Following the decisive action by the relevant authorities, there was a boost to the world economy at a most difficult time. There have now been nine interest rate cuts in the USA, three by the European Central Bank and six by the Bank of England in the last few months. All those institutions have made statements in the past few weeks that they will not hesitate to take further action if necessary. I am therefore grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to put the record straight.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (North-East Derbyshire): The measures announced mean that it will be easier to tackle underground banking, money laundering conducted nationally and, with the G7, that practised in overseas financial institutions. Will the provisions be extended so that problems can be tackled in countries like Nigeria, where the Abacha regime salted away masses of money under the dictatorship? Surely the fact that there is nothing internationally to stop the Tobin tax has been finally established. A tax on currency speculation is of great importance in tackling terrorism because it will get at the problem of global poverty.

**Mr. Brown:** My hon. Friend wants to draw me into a very wide debate. May I answer him on the first point about Nigeria? I believe that under the measures that are being embedded in law and have been over the past few years, to which we are adding today, banks have an obligation to report suspicious transactions and we have the power to freeze the money involved. That makes it possible to say that what happened in the past should not happen in the same way again. We are determined to root out the sort of practice that caused us problems in the past. As for the Nigerian case, it is a matter of judicial review, so my hon. Friend would not expect me to comment further on that.

With regard to the Tobin tax, two issues are involved. The first is the volatility of the international financial markets, and the second is the need for finance for development. On the volatility of the financial markets, it has not been shown that the Tobin tax would make the difference in a liberalised set of capital markets. Interestingly enough, Professor Tobin himself now takes that view. On the financing of development, however, a powerful case has been made for all of us to do more, not just in terms of emergency aid in Afghanistan and Pakistan. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development has made additional money available—and further money will be necessary—to feed people there during these difficult times, but more is needed for the general financing of development, so that education, health and anti-poverty programmes move ahead. We stand four square behind all those who want to see a better international approach to securing finance for development.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield): Further to the question asked by the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury, the Chancellor will be aware that many billions of dollars move through the banks of dependent territories. In recent months the Cayman Islands, Gibraltar and Bermuda have been highlighted. Could the Chancellor amplify his earlier answer and say specifically what measures are being taken to encourage the dependent territories to introduce new laws rapidly, and what time scale he envisages for the introduction of such laws to dry up money laundering in those countries? Legislation there is every bit as important as it is here in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Brown:** The hon. Gentleman is right. Those are big financial centres: the Cayman Islands is the fifth largest financial centre in the world, Bermuda is a world leader in insurance, ranking alongside New York and London for the insurance trades, and more than 300,000 international business corporations are registered in the British Virgin Islands, so what happens in those offshore centres is important. That is why their accepting anti-money laundering legislation and control systems based on the UK model is important. They have done so, and they are not named in the financial action taskforce list of countries where further action must be taken, because they have introduced anti-money laundering legislation. However, they will have to do more. That is why we have been in discussion with them about their

*[Mr. Brown]*

adopting the same regulations and laws as we are adopting, or similar regulations and laws, to deal with the sources of terrorist finance. We remain determined to move ahead on all fronts. That means that we can only be as strong as the weakest link, and action must be taken in the dependent territories.

I believe that the hon. Gentleman will be reassured by the fact that those countries and dependent territories have issued statements to the effect that they are prepared to go in the same direction as we are going to increase the anti-terrorism powers available to them. We also had a debate with them on extending the exchange of information, and I believe that we are making progress on that as well.

**Mr. Tom Clarke** (Coatbridge and Chryston): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the House will warmly welcome his proposals? Can he tell us whether the G7 countries and the other important international concerns with which he has been in consultation have agreed with the measures that he has announced in the document that he said he would publish this afternoon?

On the subject of Peru, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the new President, Toledo, is prepared to co-operate in a way that his predecessor, Fujimori, despite his experience of the terrorist organisation Shining Path, was unable or unwilling to do?

**Mr. Brown:** I shall write to my right hon. Friend about that point, as I shall write to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who raised it previously, and I shall look at the papers affecting Peru, to which my attention has been drawn.

On international co-operation, there is no doubt that there has been an increased willingness to co-operate to tackle the sources of terrorist finance. That co-operation means that Germany has just set up a economic crime unit; the Americans have an asset-tracking centre, which has been set up since 11 September; France has issued, and will issue in more detail in the next few days, its action plan to combat financial terrorism, and the Japanese authorities have said likewise, so there is a degree of international co-operation that had not been in existence in this area before, and there is a determination that we will exchange information internationally so that we can deal with the problems. It is, of course, important that centres where little action has been taken in the past are the subject of further scrutiny. That is why we want the financial action taskforce to set down at the end of the month new rules on the financing of terrorism that all countries must apply.

**Angus Robertson** (Moray): On behalf of the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru, may I welcome the announcement of measures to cut off the supply of funds to terrorism? Clearly, such action is necessary and timely. May I also thank the Chancellor and the Home Secretary for providing copies of their statements?

Does the Chancellor recall that the Financial Services Authority said in March that it had found that 23 British banks had happily handled the money of the late Nigerian dictator General Sani Abacha and reported that 15 of them had significant control weaknesses in their anti-laundering rules? Is he confident that the measures announced today will make such cases, which involve state terrorists and murderous dictators, impossible in future?

**Mr. Brown:** That is our intention. As I mentioned in reply to a previous question about exactly the same matter, the power that we now have to require financial institutions to report to the authorities when there are reasonable suspicions about the possible use of funds for terrorist purposes, as well as the power to freeze money, were not available when the authorities were originally dealing with the Nigerian case. I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the 23 banks that were named. He might also note that we have offered official assistance to the Nigerian authorities to help them in the recovery of money. That is currently a matter for judicial review, so I cannot, of course, comment on the outcome. We are not only taking legislative measures to deal with potential problems but offering assistance to the Nigerian authorities in dealing with their current problems.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, especially as the Select Committee on International Development identified in a report on corruption published in March many of the issues that he has raised. In particular, it dealt with the Abacha issue, money laundering and so on. On money laundering, the Committee concluded on the basis of the evidence given to us that there was gross under-reporting of suspicious transactions among professionals such as lawyers and accountants. Will he reassure us that people who refuse to report such transactions will be caught by the legislation that he is proposing?

**Mr. Brown:** As my hon. Friend has shown, one of the problems is that there is currently no international obligation for financial institutions to report suspicious transactions. The tightening up that has occurred in Britain has not yet taken place in other countries, but we are determined that it should happen. My hon. Friend may note that the second European Union money laundering directive is now the subject of debate in the European Parliament. The directive would require lawyers, accountants and other financial practitioners to report suspicious transactions. If it were agreed to, it would represent a tightening up of the law throughout Europe. I urge the European Parliament to introduce it as quickly as possible.

**Mr. John Baron** (Billericay): As part of the Government's anti-terrorism measures, does the Chancellor intend to release additional moneys to allow a substantial increase in police numbers? As we all know, any legislation that is passed by the House is worth while only if it can be enforced on the ground. We know that our police forces are overstretched and that crime is increasing. I believe that the additional burden of anti-terrorism measures, together with progress on increasing security—sadly, this will become a fact of life—means that we need a step change in our policing levels.

**Mr. Brown:** I did not think that the first call to be made today for more money would come from the Opposition Benches, but indeed it has. We have said that we accept

that, where security issues, international development responsibilities and the defence and military requirements of what is happening in Afghanistan cause additional resources to be required, that will be a priority for the Government. The hon. Gentleman may have noted that we said that additional resources would be available for NCIS. We also said that they would be available for special branch and its investigative resources. We are increasing Home Office expenditure and expenditure on the police by around 6 per cent. in real terms this year and next year. Of course, we shall continue to examine legitimate claims.

**Mr. Jim Cousins** (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): My right hon. Friend knows that the House is with him when he says that the concealed ownership of bank accounts and companies can hide crime. However, he also knows that NCIS already receives 15,000 reports of money laundering a year and attempts to tackle them with a staff of 30. Each member of a police fraud squad deals with, on average, three to four live cases with a value of almost £1 million. Customs and Excise investigation and fraud teams are considering a major programme of job losses. Will my right hon. Friend assure hon. Members that the capacity will exist to implement the new laws that he proposes?

**Mr. Brown:** I shall outline two of the improvements that are being made at the request of the various services that form NCIS. First, there will be greater co-ordination, and the services will be put in the position of being able to work better and more closely together.

Secondly, we want better asset-tracking intelligence to enable us to distinguish between a suspicious transaction report, which, for example, claims that an additional amount of money was put in a bank account for something of no particular consequence, and the alternative—tracking the assets of terrorists. We want intelligence to be available that will allow us to distinguish between the important and the unimportant. After that has been done, it will be possible to say that many of the cases that are passed on for investigation give the police a clear lead about what they need to do. Of course, we will consider the resources that are necessary to ensure that the service is done well.

**Mr. Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton): We all agree about the difficulty of gaining international agreement on sanctions against financial centres that are not prepared to clean up their act. For what measures to sanction those countries will the British member of the financial action taskforce press.

**Mr. Brown:** When the financial action taskforce made its original recommendations, it named several countries that had to bring their practices into line with the accepted standard for the international community. We gave those countries until 30 September to do that. Action against them, and appropriate future action will be considered at the meeting in October.

Every financial centre that refuses to operate in a way that fulfils international standards will increasingly be outlawed from the rest of the international community. We will lead the calls for the behaviour of centres that do not follow the rules, proper procedures and agreed international standards to be perceived as unacceptable, and for them to lose business increasingly as a result.

**Mr. Ian Davidson** (Glasgow, Pollok): I welcome the Chancellor's drawing of links between terrorism, drugs, crime and associated problems. However, there is a major omission from the list: tax evasion. It would be helpful if my right hon. Friend extended his powers to cover that. Does he accept that there should be no undue restrictions on the search for financial information and that trawls, which should be carried out, would uncover many links between the different problems?

Would my right hon. Friend also consider amending the current balance between penalties and rewards for those engaged in money laundering? The profits are enormous and the penalties, especially for lawyers, accountants and bankers in the City of London and elsewhere who assist terrorists to hide their money, are slight. Does he agree that publicly hanging a couple of lawyers would greatly assist with concentrating the mind?

**Mr. Brown:** We are against capital punishment.

**Mr. John Bercow** (Buckingham): Even of lawyers?

**Mr. Brown:** I cannot say that.

My hon. Friend rightly draws attention to the problem of tax evasion. Since 1997, we have increased significantly the legislation that tackles tax evasion. Today, we have announced a change in the law on the ability of the Inland Revenue to pass information to the police. That information could not previously be passed on unless treason or murder was involved. We believe that a range of crimes justify passing information from the Inland Revenue to the police. We will consult on the details of the legislation, but the police will have more sources of information from the Inland Revenue about crimes that are being committed.

We are therefore not only increasing the laws that tighten up action against tax evasion, but making it increasingly possible to deal with financial terrorism through giving the Inland Revenue the ability to pass information to the police authorities in specific instances.

**Lembit Öpik** (Montgomeryshire): Will the Chancellor ensure that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as well as Ministers in the south of Ireland and the Stormont Assembly, are consulted as the measures are implemented?

**Mr. Brown:** As I said earlier, some measures that we are introducing today already apply in Northern Ireland and we are therefore extending them to the rest of the United Kingdom. However, if measures specifically affect Northern Ireland or if there is a general need for discussion on measures that will affect Northern Ireland as they apply to the United Kingdom as a whole, we shall consult.

**Roger Casale** (Wimbledon): My right hon. Friend is right to stress that money laundering and other illicit financial transactions are a worldwide phenomenon, so he is also right to stress the importance of co-operative action at European level in framing an international response.

*[Roger Casale]*

However, will he also consider the examples of best practice in other European countries, in particular the experience of a previous Italian Government and the Banca d'Italia in tackling organised crime in that country by making banking procedures more transparent, so cutting off Mafia access to Mafia funds? That example was studied in depth on a trip in March 2000 by the British-Italian parliamentary group to the Banca d'Italia and the Italian equivalent of the Speaker's Office, and I would be pleased to make the report available to my right hon. Friend.

**Mr. Brown:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We shall examine the successes and the weaknesses of operations across the world in considering what we can best do. I believe that the degree of international co-operation now allows us to share experience about what is working and what is not likely to work. The EU money-laundering directive is on the table and I gather that it is to be discussed by the European Parliament on Wednesday. It is possible to move forward and the directive could be implemented next month. I urge all Members of the European Parliament to join us in getting it through.

## Railtrack

5.22 pm

**The Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Mr. Stephen Byers):** With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a statement concerning Railtrack, to describe to the House the worsening financial crisis facing Railtrack, which led the Government to petition for railway administration on 7 October, and to outline the further measures that we intend to take to put the interests of the travelling public first.

The House will be aware of the history of Railtrack, as will Conservative Members. When the railway industry was restructured following the Railways Act 1993, Railtrack was created by the Conservative Government. In 1996, Railtrack was privatised by the Conservative Government. It was the only publicly floated utility subsidised by the Government. That subsidy made up the majority—in fact, some two thirds—of its revenue.

After the Hatfield train crash nearly 12 months ago, the whole network was urgently reviewed and fundamental safety issues were addressed. That added significantly to costs, with Railtrack claiming that it needed an extra £700 million a year to put the track in a proper condition.

On 2 April 2001, Railtrack asked for help because of its pressing financial difficulties. We brought forward £1.5 billion of investment from the period beyond 2006 to the five-year period starting on 1 April 2001. The first instalment of that deal was paid on 1 October this year in full—£337 million.

However in May, June and July, the company's position worsened dramatically. On 25 July, at a meeting in my office, the chairman said that the position was far worse than he had thought in April. Unless extra financial assistance from the Government was provided, it was clear that on 8 November, when Railtrack was due to give its interim results, it would be unable to make the critical statement that it was "a going concern". The effect of that would have been disastrous. Immediately I ordered intensive discussions with Railtrack.

In August, Railtrack's advisers came back to the Department and said that there were simply three options: restructuring, renationalisation or, as they described it, receivership. Thus it was Railtrack's advisers who first raised the possibility of insolvency if no additional Government funding was available.

I immediately asked my officials to investigate the restructuring option, which involved the provision of yet more funding to Railtrack. Railtrack asked for Government funding to cover all its costs plus a profit and a four-year suspension of the regulatory system. Those were Railtrack's proposals.

Given the company's demands, we began to prepare for the possibility that we might be unable to provide additional funding and that, as a consequence, Railtrack would be insolvent. To protect passengers' interests it was clearly right to explore the need for railway administration on a contingency basis. As a result, preliminary contact was made with Ernst and Young on 23 August.

There were further negotiations and various modified proposals, but it was becoming obvious that the company could not continue unless we offered to fund whatever

losses it might have for a period of several years. I took the view that I simply could not responsibly enter into such a guarantee on behalf of the British taxpayer.

We carried on discussions until 3 October, but no way out of the dilemma could be found: either we gave the guarantee on money, or the company became insolvent. So, on Friday 5 October, I reviewed all the relevant papers and considered all the options, including Railtrack's proposed rescue package and the additional Government funding that would be required. Railtrack's proposals were cast in such a way that it was hard to be sure about the precise sum that it was seeking, but it was effectively an open-ended funding request to the Government. I decided that I could not give Railtrack a blank cheque.

That very afternoon, I informed John Robinson, the chairman of Railtrack, of my decision and of my intention to petition the High Court for a railway administration order if the company was insolvent. The order was granted on 7 October. Railtrack was taken into administration because it was, or was likely to become, unable to pay its debts. Our petition to the High Court showed that there would be a deficit of £700 million by 8 December this year, rising to £1.7 billion by the end of March next year.

In granting the order, Mr. Justice Lightman said:

"This is clearly a case where the making of a railway administration order is not only appropriate, but absolutely essential, and I shall therefore make that order immediately."

The press has made much of the position of shareholders. At the time of the April agreement, the Government felt that we should make it clear that our role should be to support the railway network but that we should not be seen as acting as guarantor of individual companies or their shareholders. We therefore agreed with Railtrack a statement of principles. The first point in the statement reads as follows:

"The Government stands behind the rail system but not individual rail companies and their shareholders who need to be fully aware of the projected liabilities of the companies in which they invest and the performance risks they face".

To ensure that that statement had wide circulation in the City, it was released through the stock exchange news service.

The directors of Railtrack have now said that they want £3.60 a share. On our calculations, that would require the transfer of up to £1.5 billion of new money from the taxpayer direct to Railtrack shareholders. We believe that it would be wrong to make new money available, and we will not do it.

In the light of the administration of Railtrack, we believe that we should now consider reshaping the structure of the industry in a way that recognises that the needs of the travelling public must come first. We shall propose to the administrator that a private company limited by guarantee be established to take over Railtrack's responsibilities. Any operating surplus it makes would be re-invested in the railway network. Such a company would have the needs of the travelling public and other users as a priority. As it would have no shareholders, we would remove the conflict between the need to increase shareholder value and the interests of rail passengers.

The company we propose would have responsibility for operations, maintenance and renewals. It would have a small professional board of executive and non-executive directors. Performance targets would be set and linked to levels of service, safety and value for money. The board would work on commercial lines but would focus solely on delivering a safe, well-maintained rail network that is fit for the 21st century.

The company would be able to promote collaboration and co-operation around the wheel and track interface, the absence of which has been one of Railtrack's weaknesses. A private company limited by guarantee would need far less intense regulation. We therefore intend to streamline the existing structure while still recognising that there will be a continued need for some form of independent economic regulation.

We shall discuss these proposals with the industry's key players. We are clear that it is important for the new structure to provide strong strategic leadership; a cut in the burden of day-to-day interference; an end to the self-defeating system of penalties and compensation; clearer accountability; and an end to perverse incentives.

The new company that we shall propose would be able to raise funds in the market. [HON. MEMBERS: "Which market?"] Wait and see. Private sector funding would operate in partnership with Government to deliver the 10-year plan objectives for rail. Under our proposals, we intend to offer all existing lenders to Railtrack plc the opportunity to transfer to the new company with no loss of principal or interest. Any debt transferred to the new company would be financially sound and would have, at the time of transfer, good long and short-term credit ratings.

Many talented and motivated people work in Railtrack. They have worked with dedication, especially over the past seven days, and I thank them for that. I know that they and the rest of the industry want an improved railway system. I believe that, with the demise of Railtrack, that is what they will get. The Government are committing some £30 billion to the network over the next 10 years.

The administration of Railtrack provides us with a golden opportunity to create a railway system that is united and not fragmented; a railway industry with a shared strategic vision; a railway industry that can respond to the needs of our time; and a railway network provider that answers to the millions of passengers and not to private shareholders.

Our decisive action makes all that possible, and I commend it to the House.

**Mr. Eric Pickles** (Brentwood and Ongar): I thank the Secretary of State for providing me with advance sight of his statement. I am sure he will be shocked to realise that it arrived only a few moments before the start of the debate. No doubt he will strive to ensure that, in future, statements arrive on time.

I commend the right hon. Gentleman for his power of prophecy. Does he recall saying on 1 July, on "Breakfast with Frost", that the railways

"need a period of stability",

and arguing that nationalisation would

"mean paralysis of the system"?

I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman: that is exactly what has happened today. He was right in saying that it would take a few years to establish the nationalised system, and that the railway network would simply get worse.

*[Mr. Eric Pickles]*

The Secretary of State has driven a coach and horses through the Government's 10-year transport plan. The net results of his venture will be higher fares, fewer trains, a reduction in passenger numbers, and a decline in freight. The expansion of the network is now yesterday's agenda; we will return to managing decline.

Interestingly, the right hon. Gentleman said in his statement:

"The company we propose would have responsibility for operations, maintenance and renewals."

So it's goodbye to expansion: the company will clearly have no room for expansion of the rail network.

The right hon. Gentleman also said that the Government would guarantee £30 billion. That is just half of what is due from the Government's plan. Where is the £34 billion of private investment to come from? The best we can hope for is a 12-month delay in investment in such vital services as the west coast and east coast main lines, Thameslink 2000 and the train protection system. For 12 months, nothing much will happen—and who will trust the Government again? [HON. MEMBERS: "Everyone."] Certainly not the City institutions, which will run a mile. If, as the right hon. Gentleman suggests, the new company is able to raise money, it will have to do so at a premium, because the Government, having reneged on an agreement, will not be trusted again.

The Government certainly will not be trusted by ordinary investors. It is all very well for the Secretary of State to talk about what was sent through the stock exchange news service, but what about the signalmen? I do not suppose that many of them consult the stock exchange news service. Why did the right hon. Gentleman not mention this on "Breakfast with Frost"? Was it because he forgot?

Let us consider the plight of the ordinary investor. If the right hon. Gentleman had seen today's edition of *The Sun*, he would have read about a 33-year-old signalman from Middlesbrough who had worked for Railtrack and British Rail since leaving school at 17. He owns 6,870 Railtrack shares—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal):** Order. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to be heard.

**Mr. Pickles:** I am grateful for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Matthew, the signalman, said:

"I'd saved up hard for many years and, two years ago, decided to buy shares in Railtrack. I knew it was a good company, despite some difficulties, and didn't want to risk my savings".

According to that signalman, what the right hon. Gentleman has done

"is at the expense of the workforce, genuine working-class people like me who've tried to better themselves."

Ninety-two per cent of Railtrack employees participated in the company's share scheme. Many of them exercised their option to purchase additional shares long after the Government had secretly decided to make their savings worthless. They put their trust in the Government, and the Government let them down.

The Secretary of State needs to answer some specific questions. On what date did he take the decision to formulate the plan to put Railtrack into administration as the preferred option? Is it true that he had no face-to-face meetings with the chairman of Railtrack for a whole three months during the summer? What advice did he receive from the Rail Regulator or the Strategic Rail Authority? Is it true that the Government blocked a payment of £162 million to Railtrack, which the company should have received on 1 October, under a funding schedule published by the Rail Regulator in October 2000 and agreed by the Deputy Prime Minister in April 2001?

Is it true that on 3 October, shortly before notifying Railtrack management of the Government's intention to push the company towards administration, the Secretary of State spoke directly to the Rail Regulator and warned him to take no action to assist Railtrack? Is it true that the regulator was threatened with emergency legislation to deprive him of powers if he tried to assist Railtrack?

Most importantly of all, what guarantee can the Secretary of State provide that the rail network will require any less public funding than was requested by Railtrack?

Railtrack is bust because the Government decided to make it so, as the letter from Railtrack today shows. That demonstrates the danger of politicians interfering with the rail industry. The Secretary of State sought a political solution when a financial one was needed. He grandstanded when care was needed. What once appeared to be a carefully crafted political coup now appears to be an ill-thought-out mess.

This action has been the most destructive act to the railways since Dr. Beeching. The Secretary of State clings to office with his despised spin doctor. He should do all of us—including the rail industry—a favour, by quitting today.

**Mr. Byers:** There we have it.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his position. I am disappointed that it was not the shadow Secretary of State who responded to the statement, but I look forward to crossing swords with her in due course.

The hon. Gentleman is right that on 1 July I appeared on the Frost programme. At that time, we thought that the 2 April deal would finance Railtrack through this year, into next year and for the five-year control period. It was not until 25 July, when John Robinson, the chairman of Railtrack, came to my office, that we were informed of the grave financial circumstances facing the company. From then on, it was clear that we faced a dilemma: either to fund Railtrack with a blank cheque or to put in place a contingency plan in case railway administration was needed. It is prudent and appropriate that we plan on a contingency basis. If we had not done that, Railtrack would have collapsed into receivership and the network would have been in chaos.

Since last Monday, the trains have continued to run and no one has lost their job. We are in a period of railway administration and the company that subsequently emerges will put the interests of the travelling public first. It will be focused on operations renewal and maintenance. We will use special-purpose vehicles for enhancement projects. We are moving in that direction already.

As I said in my statement, I took my decision on 5 October after considering all the relevant documents. The Government have met all our legal obligations regarding payments to Railtrack.

**Mr. Mark Francois** (Rayleigh): Not to shareholders.

**Mr. Byers:** Despite what the hon. Gentleman believes—which is a sign of the Conservative party's priorities—the Government are not here to fund the shareholders of private companies. During privatisation, £700 million was paid in dividends to Railtrack shareholders. It was a company in crisis and came to the Government with a begging bowl month after month. It begged for taxpayers' money while handing out dividends to shareholders.

A sign of Railtrack's conflicting priorities is the fact that, while it faced a deficit of £700 million by this December, it paid yet another dividend to shareholders of £88 million at the beginning of October. That is the reality. Shareholders and investors have a choice. The Government made it clear on 2 April that we would stand behind the industry, not behind individual companies or shareholders.

Interestingly, we did not hear a word from the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) about the problems that Railtrack faced as a result of the very nature of privatisation. He did not even attempt to explain the dogma that led to the privatisation of Railtrack, but we must be very clear about the fact that Railtrack was taken into administration because it could not control its costs. Its overrun on the west coast main line amounted to billions of pounds, and it had hundreds of millions of pounds of liabilities that were due to be paid, so we had to act. We acted in the interests of rail passengers and the public, and we make no apology for so doing.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the fact that Railtrack was, to all intents and purposes, bankrupt has been an open secret in the industry for many months? Indeed, if it had not been able to keep coming back to the Government for more and more money without any evidence of what it would do with it, it would have been automatically put into bankruptcy. Is he also aware that the real problem has been that, when Railtrack was criticised for not keeping up its maintenance, for not seeking proper funding and certainly for not being able to carry out the costings of the modernisation programmes to which it was committed, it was handing out £1 million in compensation to failed executives?

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that, unfortunately, the people who will suffer are the railwaymen who, instead of being offered bonuses, for which they had worked and to which they were entitled, were paid off by Railtrack with more shares, although it must have known what was going to happen because the City of London had made it very clear what it thought of the company?

Will my right hon. Friend give the House a very simple guarantee that the new company will not, in any circumstances, continue to pour money in without guarantees to the travelling public and to those who need a modern and rebuilt railway system that it will be spent on the railway, that it will be paid to those who maintain and build the railway, that it will not go into contractors' pockets and that it will not be handed over to other companies that have proved, in many instances, that they cannot run their existing operations?

**Mr. Byers:** My hon. Friend makes a number of very important points. The report that her Select Committee—the Transport Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions—published on 29 March showed very clearly Railtrack's failures in terms of renewal and maintenance and how it had simply failed to manage the railway network.

We want a new company, coming out of administration, that will not face the conflict of having to enhance value for shareholders but will have one overriding priority—the interests of the travelling public and the freight industry. As it will be a not-for-profit organisation, any operating surplus will be reinvested in the industry, doing away with the conflict that existed under Railtrack. That will make a real difference for the travelling public. Railtrack's demise offers a golden opportunity to recast the railway industry in our country and to create a railway industry that is fit for the 21st century, which simply is not the case at the moment.

**Mr. Don Foster** (Bath): Given the Tories' record on the railways, does the Secretary of State not agree that a degree of contrition from the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) would have been appropriate?

Does the Secretary of State agree that it was vital to end, in a monopoly, the obscene conflict between shareholder profit and passenger safety? Will he confirm that his proposal to turn those parts of Railtrack that relate directly to the running of the railways into a not-for-profit, public-interest company are not only sensible but mirror proposals made by Liberal Democrat Members as early as February this year?

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge, however, that the way in which he has handled this affair over the past few days has led to confusion about who is in charge of what and who owns what? After a botched privatisation, are we not in danger of his botching what is, in fact, a sensible solution?

I agree with the Secretary of State that the public have been rightly concerned that shareholders have received money from Railtrack while, at the same time, the company has been going round with a begging bowl asking for more money from taxpayers. Will he confirm that, even today, Railtrack's website acknowledges that its property portfolio assets are expected to yield a return of £1 billion to shareholders over the next five years? Does he agree that that is the equivalent of £1.80 per share, in addition to the value of all the other assets that have been described elsewhere? Will he confirm yet again, as he has already today, that there will be no more taxpayers' money going to shareholders?

Given that the Secretary of State has at long last accepted the need to start to reintegrate track and train, will he now stop his crazy proposal to do exactly the reverse for the London underground?

**Mr. Byers:** We are proposing a sensible alternative to Railtrack. When the hon. Gentleman has had time to study the details, he will realise that it our proposals are not the same as his—at least, I hope they are not.

**Mr. Foster:** I gave them to the right hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Byers:** I am conscious that the hon. Gentleman gave them to me; that is why I think they are not the same, but we can discuss that a little later.

Railtrack plc is the body in administration. Railtrack Group is not in administration; it is still being run by the board of directors and it still has shareholders. There will be assets and value in Railtrack Group, and that value can be used for the benefit of shareholders. That is an important point to make, because it shows the need to ensure that we keep the rail network operating—the Government's top priority—and that Railtrack Group, which is not in administration, can find value from its assets. If it can do that, that value can be made available to shareholders. The important point, however, is that new Government money will not be given to compensate shareholders. We feel that to do so would be inappropriate.

The hon. Gentleman's final point was about the implications for the London underground, whose position is totally different from that of Railtrack. The important thing to remember about our proposal for London Underground is that, although it has been portrayed by our critics as a Railtrack on the underground, the reality is that it will continue to be a publicly run company. London Underground will have contracts with the private sector, so the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman mentioned will not be repeated in our proposals to modernise and invest in the tube.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): Does the Secretary of State agree that this calamity was prophesied precisely by the report of the Transport Select Committee in 1993? That Committee opposed privatisation, even though it was chaired by a Conservative and had a Conservative majority. Should we not look for Conservative Members to offer a small apology for privatisation?

The model being proposed now is similar to one that Glas Cymru introduced. We have discovered a genuine third way: a combination of the vigour of the private sector and the security of state enterprises.

**Mr. Byers:** My hon. Friend is right when he refers to the reservations that many Conservative Members had about privatisation when it was introduced in 1993. At that stage, the proposal was for Railtrack to remain in the public sector, but in 1996 the then Prime Minister, John Major, was desperate for a privatisation and, as there was nothing else left, he went for Railtrack. We are now living with the consequences of that flawed and failed privatisation.

My hon. Friend referred to Glas Cymru, formerly Welsh Water, which provides a similar model to the one that we adopting in this case. He referred to it as a "third way", and it was interesting to hear him say that. It is the first time that I have heard him talk favourably about the third way—long may that continue.

The important point is that Labour Members have made it clear that modernisation and reform of public services are important. We have said that, when we think the private sector can add value, it has a role to play. Railtrack was not adding value; it was destroying the rail network. The Government were therefore prepared to take action to put the public interest first. We have done that for railways and we shall do it for public services as well.

**Sir Brian Mawhinney** (North-West Cambridgeshire): When the Secretary of State instructed his officials on 25 August to commence discussions with Ernst and Young preparatory to taking Railtrack into administration, did he also instruct his officials to tell the stock exchange that that is what he was doing?

**Mr. Byers:** We were very much aware, as is the right hon. Gentleman, of the Government's legal responsibilities and of the legal responsibilities of the directors of a quoted company. We took that into account.

**Mr. Peter Pike** (Burnley): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on taking this action, which is the best way of saving the railway system in this country. Does he accept that most people in the north-west believe that the failure resulted from the Tories' privatisation of the railway system and the way in which they broke it into many fragments and different companies? Most of the public believe that the system was bankrupt and that it was obscene to pay the latest dividend. Most people in the north-west also believe that we would not have got the second phase of the west coast main line if action had not been taken to save the situation.

**Mr. Byers:** The west coast main line will be one of the top priorities, and we already discussing with the administrator how we can make sure that the project moves forward far more positively than it has under the stewardship of Railtrack.

I am pleased to hear that the measures that we have taken for Railtrack are popular in the north-west. I am sure that they are, and I am also confident that they will be popular throughout the whole United Kingdom.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke** (Rushcliffe): Did the Secretary of State's reply of a few moments ago mean that it is still the Government's policy that private sector finance will be the major source of future investment in the railways and many other important infrastructure projects? If so, does he not realise that his obvious scorn for the protection of shareholder value and for the notion of a reasonable return on capital will make it impossible to raise genuine private finance for the west coast main line, for the London underground and for many other projects unless they are accompanied by Government guarantees, the minimal transfer of risk or a hugely increased cost of the borrowing required? If he does not accept that, he does not realise how much damage he has done to the interests of the railway network, the travelling public and many other people looking for much-needed investment in our public services and utilities.

**Mr. Byers:** What is very instructive is how some of the main architects of the crisis that was Railtrack—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I shall—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The Secretary of State is responding to questions.

**Mr. Byers:** I shall answer the question, but the public need to note that the architects of Railtrack and its privatisation have failed to utter a single word of apology during this statement.

On the specific points made by the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), Railtrack comprises Railtrack plc and Railtrack Group. I thought that I made it clear that the value of the assets that are held in Railtrack Group can and will be allocated to shareholders if the directors so determine. I give the commitment on behalf of the Government that we will do all that we can to enhance, if it is appropriate, the value of those assets, but no new public money will go into Railtrack because that would be wrong and inappropriate.

I do not scorn the position of shareholders, but I recognise that in a dynamic market they have to decide where they invest their money. We made it clear on 2 April that as a Government we do not stand behind individual companies or shareholders. The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) asked who told the shareholders that. What is interesting is that on 11 April Railtrack's chief executive, Steve Marshall, was clear about it. He said:

"Yes,

the Government

"would allow us to go bust. It's quite clearly item one on the agreement"

that we have entered into

"with the Government. While the Government stands behind the industry, they don't stand behind any particular company, of course they don't."

That is the situation.

Most people recognise that Railtrack was unique in the involvement of the private sector. There will be opportunities for private finance to work with Government funding. With the assurances that we have given over the past seven days, we are confident that the private sector will continue to want to be involved in public-private partnerships.

**Mr. Bill O'Brien** (Normanton): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of hon. Members and the public welcome his statement and his action to try to save Railtrack? The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) had difficulty justifying any statement that opposed my right hon. Friend because the privatisation of Railtrack has failed. There is no doubt about that, and it is difficult for Conservative Members to do anything but accept that failure. When the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar sat on the Transport Committee he joined all his Committee colleagues in criticising Railtrack.

I want my right hon. Friend to assure me that when the new company is established it will implement the improvements planned for Railtrack and for stations, including Wakefield in my neighbouring constituency, so that we have the railway system to which we are entitled in the 21st century.

**Mr. Byers:** My hon. Friend makes an important point about the need to ensure that the money that is being invested in the railway network is used for the purpose for which Parliament votes it.

As for the view of the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar on Railtrack, I do not know whether it was recorded in 1993, but it is interesting to know that as a member of the Committee he signed up to all-party recommendations on the need to change Railtrack's nature. I regret that his elevation to shadow Transport Minister means that he has to deny his good work all those years ago. It just shows that, for the Conservatives, dogma and ambition will always triumph over reason.

**Peter Bottomley** (Worthing, West): It is public knowledge that one of my brothers-in-law runs a railway.

Does the Secretary of State understand that he is being tested, at least for today, and that the House is concerned as to whether there are flaws in his conduct? Has his office denied the words quoted in the business news section of *The Sunday Times* yesterday, in which a journalist was told that he would look like an—expletive—"idiot" if he said that the company was bankrupt? One of the final paragraphs of that article states:

"A source close to Byers said that the minister now regretted not forcing"

his special adviser

"to resign over her leaked memo."

Has the Secretary of State denied that?

When did the offices of the Chancellor and the Prime Minister know that the Secretary of State thought that Railtrack's most likely outcome would be administration? Will his way of funding capital investment be cheaper? Finally, how many workers in the rail industry either owned or potentially owned shares?

**Mr. Byers:** I am aware that the hon. Gentleman's brother-in-law is involved in a good railway company, which I often use.

**Mr. John Bercow** (Buckingham): It is still a good company.

**Mr. Byers:** I take the hon. Gentleman's word for that.

On the substance, I know that the conversations that did or did not take place will be of great interest. The important point is that no one briefed on our approach to railway administration before we moved in that direction.

On action that might be taken against serving civil servants, the position is clear: official disciplinary procedures should be followed, and that is appropriate.

As for the value of the private sector funding that we can achieve, I believe, as a result of assurances that we have given, that there will be continued interest from the private sector to support public-private partnerships.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst):** Order. I am aware that many hon. Members understandably have an interest in this subject and, in many cases, a deep knowledge of it, but after two very long supplementary questions I appeal for questions to be much more concise. Otherwise, many hon. Members will be disappointed.

**Dr. Gavin Strang** (Edinburgh, East and Musselburgh): As my right hon. Friend considers the best future structure for the railway industry, may I remind him of the finding

*[Dr. Gavin Strang]*

in Lord Cullen's report on the Ladbroke Grove accident? He found that the fragmentation of the railway industry made it difficult for it to take united action on safety. Rather than set up another private company to which we give billions of pounds of taxpayers' money, should we not take this opportunity to bring the railways back into public ownership?

**Mr. Byers:** The recommendations in Lord Cullen's two reports into the tragic accident at Ladbroke Grove just over two years ago should be followed and implemented with all due speed. They are sensible and will improve the safety record of our railways. My right hon. Friend knows that Cullen did not recommend renationalisation. He gave careful consideration to the structure of the rail network and felt that that was not appropriate. We agree with Lord Cullen's recommendations.

**Mr. Nick Hawkins** (Surrey Heath): As co-chairman of the all-party railways group, may I tell the Secretary of State that a large number of shareholders, many of whom are Railtrack employees, will find his statement astonishingly complacent? Is he prepared to appear before any of the regulatory bodies of the City of London that may wish to commence formal inquiries into whether he has properly informed City regulatory bodies about his steps in this matter? When he talks about his planned company having future opportunities to raise credit, does he not recognise that, as a result not only of this fiasco but of his failure to sack Jo Moore, his political credit rating is now zero?

**Mr. Byers:** The important thing is that my actions were taken fully in line with all the legal advice and opinions that I received. I am confident that we have addressed all the issues with regard to the regulation of the City and to obligations that I might have had to declare information relevant to shareholders. I shall certainly appear before any relevant body to explain exactly what the circumstances were.

**Mr. Brian H. Donohoe** (Cunninghame, South): My right hon. Friend took the right decision. Had he not, the Opposition would be baying for his blood because the company would have been going bankrupt.

My right hon. Friend said that he was going to consider due compensation with regard to the cherry picking that is taking place among shareholders. Will he give a commitment to me and the House that the channel tunnel, which was funded almost exclusively by public money, will not be part of that process?

**Mr. Byers:** My hon. Friend is right to say that the channel tunnel has been a great success. There is an issue about the liabilities and financial interests that Railtrack might have in the channel tunnel, and that was raised with me by Railtrack directors on Friday. I want my response to be as positive as possible, but it must reflect my responsibilities as Secretary of State. If we can ensure that the channel tunnel rail link section 1 continues on time, on schedule and on budget, we will do so. There will need to be detailed negotiations about any value that the project might have, and there are differing views about that value. I am prepared to discuss the matter with Railtrack without compromising the position that we have consistently adopted since last Sunday, which is that we will assist with Railtrack Group's assets but we will not provide any new Government funding to compensate shareholders.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York): May I commend to the Secretary of State the leading article in yesterday's *Sunday Business*, which points out that far from being a catastrophe, railway privatisation has been, in parts, a stunning success, with 35 per cent. more passengers carried and 45 per cent. more freight transported?

I declare an interest to the House in that I am a minor shareholder, on a much more modest scale than some RMT-sponsored Members, and like the Secretary of State, a regular user of GNER.

Following the Secretary of State's statement and press release of 18 July, in which he stated that Railtrack and the Strategic Rail Authority would be joint providers overseeing the infrastructure improvements to the east coast main line, what reassurance can he give the House that the line will be improved before the postponed renewal of the franchise in 2005?

**Mr. Byers:** The hon. Lady will be pleased when she sees the exact details of our proposals, and I believe that GNER will be pleased. I have discussed with the company the way in which we can restructure the railway industry to provide a better service to the travelling public, which is what GNER is trying to do. The hon. Lady will be aware of the frustration felt by that franchise holder about the way in which Railtrack was dealing with the upgrade of the east coast main line. We are now in a far stronger position to implement those improvements in time and in a way that will benefit the holder of the east coast franchise.

**Mr. Martin Salter** (Reading, West): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations and those of my constituents on his welcome, if long overdue, decision to put the interests of the travelling public ahead of those of Railtrack's shareholders and directors, one of whom used to be the hon. Member for Tunbridge Wells (Mr. Norman), and a member of the Opposition Front Bench?

Is the Secretary of State aware that his proposal to run a not-for-profit company is very similar to the suggestion made by many Labour Members for running National Air Traffic Services?

My right hon. Friend will have heard the bleating from Opposition Members about the need for an inquiry into Railtrack. If he concedes the need for such an inquiry, will its terms of reference include investigating why a public asset was sold off, just before a general election, at a bargain basement price, and why the share value rose in a matter of months from £3.90 to £17?

**Mr. Byers:** My hon. Friend states very clearly the facts about the value of Railtrack shares. It is interesting that their value did not do much good at the 1997 general election.

My hon. Friend mentioned air traffic control. Railtrack's situation is quite different from that of air traffic control, and when he has time to look at the models

that we are proposing for each he will see that we are trying to find the right model for each set of circumstances.

**Mr. Andrew MacKay** (Bracknell): Does not the Secretary of State understand that outside the House there is deep cynicism about the timing of this decision? Is he surprised about that, bearing in mind the disgraceful leaked e-mail from his special adviser? Is he aware that he has brought public and political life into disrepute by his lack of action in failing to sack Jo Moore?

**Mr. Byers:** As I said, the person concerned has been dealt with through the official disciplinary procedures.

The timing of this decision was dictated by the need to take decisions as soon as all the relevant information was available. As some Opposition Members know, stock market-sensitive information is often communicated on a Friday after the stock market has closed, especially in a case such as this, when administration may follow as a result. That is what we did in this situation, to ensure that any move to railway administration might be made in an orderly way.

I repeat the point that I made in my statement: the thousands of railway workers who turned up for work on Monday after the railway administration was announced have done a great service to the network. They have worked normally; what has happened has not distracted them. Most of them believe that an opportunity now exists to build a railway network of which they can be proud as workers and of which we can be proud as a country, as is simply not the case at the moment.

**Mr. Gerald Kaufman** (Manchester, Gorton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that if there is a criticism of him it is that he did not make his decision sooner? Public disquiet has long existed at the fact that vast sums of public money were being pumped into a system to allow the bosses of the industry to pay themselves huge salaries and bonuses, to subsidise shares without following market principles and, of course, to create a shambles of a railway system. Would my right hon. Friend accept that, now he has done this worthwhile deed, the travelling public is waiting for him to tackle the problem of the operating companies and the shambles that some of them are in? If he has that on his agenda, could he please start with Virgin?

**Mr. Byers:** My right hon. Friend makes some interesting points, as always. When the scale of the crisis was revealed on 25 July, we moved quickly to consider all the options with Railtrack and to make contingency plans for railway administration, if that proved to be necessary, as it did. Finally, on 5 October, we took the decision when all the relevant factors had been considered and all the relevant issues taken into account.

My right hon. Friend raises an important point about the role of the operating companies. We should revisit the way in which franchises are awarded to ensure that the travelling public benefit. I said in my statement that we should use this decision on Railtrack as an opportunity to restructure the whole railway industry. I intend to do that, and I would like to think that we could do that in partnership with all the key players in the industry, because that was what was lacking as a result of the privatisation imposed by the Conservatives.

**Pete Wishart** (North Tayside): I think that everyone in the House would agree that the demise of Railtrack was as predictable as it was overdue. Does the Secretary of State agree that its demise presents distinct opportunities for Scotland in particular to pursue a new type of not-for-profit investment policy for which we in the Scottish National party have argued—successfully, it seems, given the Government's conversion to that policy—over the past few years?

In Scotland we have a single Railtrack zone. ScotRail provides some 95 per cent. of all train services. Is it not now time for Scotland to break with the failures of the national Railtrack past and to improve public accountability by making the Scottish Executive and Parliament directly responsible for rail services in Scotland?

**Mr. Byers:** I am delighted that yet another Opposition party is claiming authorship of our proposals, but the hon. Gentleman's proposition does not have immediate appeal.

**John Cryer** (Hornchurch): Does my right hon. Friend agree that privatisation was a complex method of achieving the relatively simple goal of shifting massive amounts of money from taxpayers into the pockets of shareholders? I congratulate him on saying "enough is enough" to the cowboys who have been running Railtrack for the past few years, but does he agree that one of the most important things that the successor to Railtrack could do would be to begin to employ a direct labour force? That would at least start to remove some of the fragmentation, confusion and lack of accountability that have turned Britain's railways into a lethal network.

**Mr. Byers:** The issue of employment will be a matter for the company once it is established. Joint work between the company and the Government could be conducted in the field of training. Training in the railway industry has been neglected for many years, especially during the past few years of privatisation. There is a skills shortage in the railway industry, and a productive conversation can be held about the need to ensure that we have a properly skilled work force on the railway network.

**Mr. John Redwood** (Wokingham): As the Secretary of State has now accepted that cash, property and some other assets belong to group shareholders and not the receivership company, can he not see that he will have to persuade the Chancellor to put a lot more cash into the Railtrack company in administration, in order to rebuild its balance sheet now that the group and individual shareholders are shorn of those assets, and to make the company more viable for borrowing and private finance? Given the huge damage that he has done to the private finance initiative and the public accounts, will it not be impossible for his going concern certificate to be renewed by the Chancellor?

**Mr. Byers:** The right hon. Gentleman has called for my resignation on—I think—three occasions. Two of the calls were made while we were trying to save jobs at Longbridge in Birmingham. He was prepared to see the

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company sold off to a venture capitalist resulting in the loss of 6,500 jobs. That was his approach; we ignored him and we saved 6,500 jobs as a result. This action is saving the railway network for the travelling public. I have no intention of resigning for doing that.

**Mr. Jonathan Shaw** (Chatham and Aylesford): My right hon. Friend referred to the channel tunnel rail link. As the first stage of that massive infrastructure project nears completion, does he agree that it is vital to the regeneration of north Kent and its people, who have endured disruption, some blight and upheaval—it has been a sacrifice for the greater good of the United Kingdom—that the second stage is built? Will he give a guarantee that it will be built along the same route, with environmental safeguards, to ensure the economic prosperity that we so need throughout Kent and London?

**Mr. Byers:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful case on behalf of his constituents and the people of north Kent. I reassure him that major projects that were under way, whether on section 1 of the channel tunnel rail link or on the west coast main line, will continue. We are talking to the administrators about the steps that can be taken to drive forward the projects more positively and without the cost overruns that we saw under Railtrack. This is the opportunity to ensure, through special purpose vehicles, that we deliver on time and on budget. I give my hon. Friend an assurance that those projects will not be affected by this decision and will be able to continue.

**Chris Grayling** (Epsom and Ewell): I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that since privatisation passenger numbers have been rising by approximately 17 per cent. a year, to the point at which the network is suffering considerable capacity problems. Now that we are one year into his 10-year plan for the railways, will he confirm that he has secure funding to complete that plan? Will he also give some examples of enhancements to the railway network that we can expect to be open for business during this Parliament?

**Mr. Byers:** The hon. Gentleman should probably be aware that passenger numbers are up not because of privatisation but because of the strength of the economy and the fact that more people are in work. *[Interruption.]* That is why passenger numbers are on the increase. People will see improvements in the railway network as a result of the decision that we have taken. We expect that, during this Parliament, for example, section 1 of the channel tunnel rail link will be completed. That will bring real benefits to the travelling public.

**Mr. Eric Martlew** (Carlisle): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the action that he has taken, about which my constituents in Carlisle are delighted. He may be aware that in April I promoted a private Member's Bill that anticipated today's situation. I ask him for an assurance regarding the west coast main line. Next year, we shall have tilting trains, which are capable of 140 mph. Will the west coast main line be upgraded to meet that standard?

**Mr. Byers:** I am pleased that the people of Carlisle are celebrating our decision. For too long, they have suffered inadequacies on the west coast main line. The upgrade is important. I know that there has been concern that the work has been falling behind schedule and that all the enhancements that we want will not be delivered. As I said, we are talking actively to the administrator about the major infrastructure projects. We want to ensure that we can improve on the performance under Railtrack.

If there is one example of Railtrack's failure as a company, it is the way in which it allowed costs to escalate on the west coast main line. The work was originally costed at just over £2 billion; the latest estimate is some £7 billion. That has been the real problem. It is a problem not of the Government's making, but of Railtrack's failures to control its own costs.

**Lawrie Quinn** (Scarborough and Whitby): As the other co-chairman of the all-party railways group, I want to say how much I liked the part in my right hon. Friend's statement about recognising the loyalty, talent and commitment of the Railtrack staff who have gone on working for a 21st century railway. Will he give a commitment about the future of freight on rail and say whether the proposals that Railtrack had developed will be followed through by the proposed new company?

**Mr. Byers:** Freight has often been the forgotten part of the railway network. I know from the discussions that my Department and ministerial team have had with representatives of freight companies that there has been real concern about the way in which the railway network has developed. I assure my hon. Friend that we want to ensure as part of the 10-year plan—in which we have a clear objective on the growth of freight—that we deliver on that commitment.

**Mrs. Eleanor Laing** (Epping Forest): Has the Secretary of State forgotten that his Government have been in power for the past four years? Surely he must recognise that what has happened to Railtrack is a direct result of the success of the policies of his right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister, who set out deliberately to undermine Railtrack and the theory of privatisation by interfering, centralising and destroying a potentially successful company, undermining all future private sector involvement in public matters.

**Mr. Byers:** According to the Conservatives, Railtrack is not to blame. That is very interesting. I ask the hon. Lady to look at Railtrack's record, which says it all. She cannot blame an individual Member for Railtrack's position. When she reflects on her comments, she will realise that that is the reality. Railtrack is responsible for the fact that, by December this year, it would have had a deficit of £700 million and that, by March next year, it would have had a deficit of £1.7 billion. That is due to Railtrack's mismanagement, not this Government's policies.

**Sir Robert Smith** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine): Will the Secretary of State make it clear who in years to come will be responsible for delivery or failure to deliver? He has not yet answered the question about section 2 of the channel tunnel rail link. It is important to the economic regeneration of the area involved, and to ensure that the north and specifically Scotland have direct links to the channel tunnel.

**Mr. Byers:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that section 2 of the channel tunnel rail link has already

commenced. The work started on time and I understand that it is going well. Section 2 will be completed. The hon. Gentleman need not be too concerned about that. The company, limited by guarantee, will have funding from the Government by way of grant, it will have access to income from track access charges and it will be able to raise money on the private markets. It will therefore be adequately funded to deliver its part of the 10-year transport plan.

**Mr. Clive Betts** (Sheffield, Attercliffe): My hon. Friend was absolutely right to refuse to write Railtrack another blank cheque, but will he explain in greater detail the funding arrangements he has in mind for the new company? In particular, will any of its future borrowing, debt, or losses—if it makes any—be underwritten or guaranteed in any way by the Government? How will those funding arrangements sit alongside the public sector borrowing requirement?

**Mr. Byers:** The proposed company to take over Railtrack's liabilities that we will put to the administrator will be a private company; therefore its borrowing and finance will not score against public borrowing, but will be in the private sector.

**Mr. Andrew Lansley** (South Cambridgeshire): The Secretary of State will recall that just over a year ago the Government announced an investment plan for the railways of £49 billion over 10 years, £34 billion of which was to be funded by the private sector. Will he explain now how such investment is to be funded in future? Does he stand by those figures? If the Government expect the source to be private sector funding not guaranteed by the public sector, will he explain to the travelling public for whom he has such regard what that will mean in terms of access charges and passenger fares in future?

**Mr. Byers:** In terms of financing, the 10-year plan that we announced last year will not be affected by our decision on Railtrack or in other ways. It is important to remember that the City regards Railtrack as a unique body and that it recognises the reasons why the Government had to take the action we took. As the details and exactly what it is that we want to take over from Railtrack are explained to the City, it is becoming interested in the opportunities that will result from our proposals. We are confident that the targets and objectives outlined in the 10-year plan can be met as a result of the demise of Railtrack.

**Gillian Merron** (Lincoln): In welcoming my right hon. Friend's public-spirited action—an action welcomed not only by Labour Members but by people throughout the country—may I emphasise the important role that Railtrack has played in the search for a solution to the problem of increased rail traffic as it is experienced in Lincoln, where a track cuts the city in two? Will he confirm that the new organisation will have the scope to work in co-operation with regional, local and national partners so that we can get the regeneration and the rail services that Lincoln and the east midlands deserve?

**Mr. Byers:** I know that my hon. Friend has already met my right hon. Friend the Minister for Transport and stressed the importance of that development to Lincoln. There is no reason why the changes that are now to be introduced will affect her ideas on how to improve the quality of life for the people of Lincoln. I am sure that the new organisation, when it comes into being, will note the representations that she has made in the House and to my ministerial colleague.

**Tony Baldry** (Banbury): Does not the Secretary of State agree that the integrity of the London stock exchange is important to the commonwealth of the United Kingdom as a whole? Does he recognise that by creating a false market in Railtrack shares for a number of weeks, he has undermined the integrity of the London stock exchange and damaged investor confidence in London as a whole?

**Mr. Byers:** Let me answer that important point about creating a false market in Railtrack shares. As I outlined in my statement, I faced a choice on 5 October: either to guarantee further funding to Railtrack—an option that I could have chosen—or to apply to put the company into railway administration. No decision had been taken until that date. As one who follows such matters, the hon. Gentleman knows where the responsibility to inform shareholders lies if a company is in particular difficulties: he knows that it is not for the Secretary of State to do that. As soon as I took a decision, my responsibility was to make sure that the chairman of the company was informed immediately, and that is exactly what happened on 5 October.

**Mr. Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton, North): First, I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend on his timely action. Had that action been taken during the first week of May 1997, we would have saved a vast amount of grief and public money.

Will my right hon. Friend institute an investigation into the problem of gauge corner cracking? I understand from newspaper reports that the problem—it can cause broken rails and lead to accidents—is now worse than it was before Hatfield, and that, as a result of Railtrack's incompetence, it is now occurring in rails that are less than a year old.

**Mr. Byers:** My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of gauge corner cracking, which was responsible for the accident at Hatfield a year ago this Wednesday. When we consider recommendations—especially those of Cullen—on network safety and we implement those recommendations, we can address precisely that sort of issue. Most importantly, the new company that we want to take over after administration will have a clear objective: it will deal with operations, renewals and maintenance. Above all, it will not face the terrible conflict that arises from the need to increase shareholder value. Its single, overriding priority will be to provide a safe, efficient and effective railway network. The issues my hon. Friend raises can be met by the new company that we intend to create.

**Dr. John Pugh** (Southport): Has the Minister noted that many Labour Members have today complained about the fragmentation of the railways? Will he explain to them, and to us, how the proposals for London Underground can subtly avoid that ill?

**Mr. Byers:** The important point about London Underground is that our proposals for its modernisation

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and reform will result in a publicly owned London Underground in control of only three contracts with the private sector. Therefore the fragmentation about which the hon. Gentleman is so concerned will not occur under our plans for London Underground. We are not repeating the mistakes made in the privatisation of the railway network.

**John Robertson** (Glasgow, Anniesland): I, too, thank my right hon. Friend for his announcement. I was especially pleased to hear how he intends to treat shareholders. Everybody knows that entering the shareholding stakes is a gamble: the people who win are happy when it happens, but if they lose, they lose, and that is part of the game. I also thank him for his announcement regarding the west coast main line.

Will my right hon. Friend re-emphasise that safety and service to the customer are paramount, and that any new company will take that on board? In relation to the rail industry as a whole, will he ensure that no company uses the creation of any new company as an excuse to shed workers and so get more profit for its shareholders?

**Mr. Byers:** My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of safety: there must be no compromise on railway network safety. He voices concern about the position of railway workers. The company that takes over responsibilities from Railtrack will make decisions on that matter, but it is important to note that the new company will be able to invest its money in the work force, whereas Railtrack has compromised on that. Real improvements are possible.

My hon. Friend will welcome the fact that we have, through the administrator, made sure that all existing pension benefits for former railway workers will be met in full. There is no question that administration will affect the pension benefits of former railway workers.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. We must now move on. I suspect that there will be other opportunities to debate this matter.

## Business of the House

6.40 pm

**The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, with permission I should like to make a short statement about the business for the remainder of this week.

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will recognise the importance of a further debate on the current action to tackle international terrorism.

The business for the rest of the week will be:

TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER—Debate on the coalition against international terrorism on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER—Third Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER—Third Reading of the European Communities (Finance) Bill.

Motion to approve the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 2001.

FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER—Debate on clean fuels on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

**Mr. Eric Forth** (Bromley and Chislehurst) I thank the Leader of the House for announcing the debate tomorrow in Government time. I hope that he can confirm that the House will have frequent opportunities to debate the very important matter that we will cover tomorrow, and that a combination of statements and debates will be made available whenever circumstances demand. The one the right hon. Gentleman has announced for tomorrow is very timely.

The Leader of the House will have noticed that the issues that we are dealing with this week were tabled as long ago as July, because that is the way the House works. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that we must try to respond as best we can to rapidly changing circumstances. In the light of that, will he consider, even at this stage, changing the business that he has announced for Friday? Cleaner fuels may be an important issue, but are not necessarily a timely one.

I ask the Leader of the House to consider a debate on the relationship of Ministers' special advisers and civil servants and how the integrity of the civil service can be guaranteed. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman shares my view that our civil service is the envy of the world in terms of its professionalism and integrity. It has now been compromised by the actions of special advisers, and a debate on Friday would indeed be a timely opportunity for the Government to reinforce their commitment to the integrity of the civil service. They might be able to tell us how that will be achieved in future more than it has been in the recent past.

**Mr. Cook:** I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his appointment. When I told the House in June that one of the delights of my new role would be that I would see more of the right hon. Gentleman, I had no idea how

prescient I was. I think that it would be fair to say that his appointment came as much of a surprise to me as it did to many of his right hon. and hon. Friends.

I am happy to begin on a note of common ground with the right hon. Gentleman and say that we will have repeated debates on the issue of terrorism. The issue will be very much before the nation and before the House. Whenever appropriate, we will return to it in debates.

I would expect many right hon. and hon. Members to welcome the debate on Friday—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst):** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman. Whoever has the device that is causing the interruption must silence it immediately.

**Mr. Cook:** I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (David Hamilton) has underlined the importance of debating new forms of technology on Friday.

It is important that we should ensure that we take every possible step to provide a cleaner environment for our constituents and make our contribution to meeting cuts in greenhouse gases.

The Government stand ready robustly to defend the integrity of the civil service, and to justify the codes that we have produced which provide a clear understanding of how civil servants, special advisers and Ministers should behave. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to turn to the issue on an Opposition day, we shall be delighted to debate it robustly with him.

**Dr. Brian Iddon** (Bolton, South-East): Can my right hon. Friend offer the House an explanation of why the long-announced debate on drugs has been deferred? Can he assure the House that the debate will take place in the near future?

**Mr. Cook:** Yes, I can. As my hon. Friend will be aware, and as the House knows, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary earlier this afternoon made a full statement on the emergency legislation that he is preparing against terrorism. The Home Office is now responsible for bringing forward possibly three different Bills. These are the emergency measures against terrorism, the possibility of an extradition Bill and the possibility of an asylum Bill. Given that intense work load and the great importance of ensuring the security of the United Kingdom, it is understandable that in these circumstances a debate that requires the presence of the Home Office should be deferred. I hope to see the debate reinstated at an appropriate time when the Home Office can appropriately find priority for it.

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (North Cornwall): Given what the Leader of the House has just said, I wonder whether he recognises that there is a great danger that the House may suffer a severe bout of legislative indigestion in the coming weeks. May I refer him to a paraphrase of my favourite prayer, which goes as follows: may God grant us the patience to recognise the things that we cannot change for the better by law, the courage to change the things that we can, and the wisdom to know the difference?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept from the reaction of Members on both sides of the House to the Home Secretary's statement and to the Chancellor's statement earlier that we have not been very good in the past at dealing in a knee-jerk fashion with emergency legislation? I am sure that he will recall the dangerous dogs legislation, the legislation that was referred to as the dangerous football yobs Bill and previous terrorist legislation.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept the need—I think that it was represented by Members on both sides of the House earlier when the statements were made—that we should allocate appropriate time for the scrutiny of the proposed business? Does he understand that it may result in other business having to be deferred, perhaps for a long period? Will he set in motion discussions with other parties in the House to ensure that we deal with the proposed legislation effectively and scrutinise it in full?

**Mr. Cook:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his prayers. I am sure that I will benefit from them during the Session.

As for the forthcoming Bill, I fully accept his point that it is important that there should be adequate time for its scrutiny. I have said repeatedly that our maxim is that good scrutiny makes for good government. At the same time, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that our constituents beyond the House will be expecting a rapid and expeditious response from the House to ensure that we plug any gaps in our provision against terrorism. I hope that with the agreement of Members on both sides of the House we can provide time for adequate scrutiny and at the same time make decent progress. I rather like the phrase used by the shadow Home Secretary, who said that we should seek to produce good law and fast law.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the House that supplementary questions must relate to the statement that has been made by the Leader of the House on this week's business.

**Dr. Ian Gibson** (Norwich, North): Will my right hon. Friend indicate when he will set up the Science and Technology Committee? Given the contradictory statements on chemical and biological warfare, there seems to be an issue here that demands deep scrutiny.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That has nothing to do with the business statement.

**Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (Cotswold): To inform tomorrow's debate, will the Leader of the House give some idea of the timetable for the three pieces of emergency legislation? When is the House likely to see them? As they are emergency pieces of legislation, will the right hon. Gentleman say whether they will be timetabled? Given that he must have thought about the time that they will take to pass through the House, will he say something about other legislation that will have to be deferred to make time for the emergency legislation?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I do not think that the hon. Gentleman heard my ruling, which was that questions

*[Mr. Deputy Speaker]*

must relate to this week's business. There will be a further opportunity on Thursday to question the Leader of the House on wider matters.

**Mr. Simon Thomas** (Ceredigion): I welcome the debate tomorrow on the Adjournment of the House, but it is noticeable that all the recent debates have been on Adjournments of the House and not on substantive motions. Will the Leader of the House be looking to have a debate on a substantive motion very soon, possibly even on Friday?

**Mr. Cook:** It is the custom of the House to debate issues relating to such a crisis on the Adjournment of the House so that Members may make any contribution that they wish that is relevant to the crisis. That has been a longstanding practice. There have been exceptions to it, however. There was an exception during the Suez crisis when the then Opposition vigorously opposed the line that was being taken by the then Government. I do not think that there is any serious dissent within the House over the measures that are being taken by the Government. There are many ways to sense the will of the House, and those of us who sat through much of the recent three days of debate understand that at least 90 per cent. of Members are behind the action that the Government are taking. A substantive motion will not alter that clear fact.

**Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East): In relation to the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth), the shadow Leader of the House, about the proposed topic for business on Friday, will the Leader of the House reconsider his suggestion? Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that if truth be told there are as many—if not more—Labour Members as Conservative Members who are deeply upset, concerned and appalled by the behaviour of a special ministerial adviser in seeking to bury unpopular news under the blanket of a terrible terrorist outrage? Under those circumstances, how can the Leader of the House defend the suggestion that it should be for the Opposition to propose a debate on the matter on an Opposition day rather than for the Government to table a debate on Friday, when it could usefully be discussed?

**Mr. Cook:** The Government have repeatedly made it clear—I have done so, my colleagues have done so—that the statement by Jo Moore on that day was a serious error of judgment. She herself has expressed regret; I am quite sure that she will not make such a mistake again. The issue raised by the hon. Gentleman is whether someone should be dismissed for making one mistake in the course of his or her career. The judgment of the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions is that that would be unfair to the career of that special adviser, who has herself admitted that she was wrong. I hope, but it may be a vain hope, that the House is big enough to accept that she has said sorry and will not do it again. She should be given a second chance to get on with her job and we should get on with ours.

**Mr. Graham Brady** (Altrincham and Sale, West): Will tomorrow's debate on terrorism be preceded by a statement by the Prime Minister, as has been the case with previous statements? If not, when will the House be brought up to date by the Prime Minister?

**Mr. Cook:** The House will have a full opportunity to be brought up to date during the course of tomorrow's debate, but the present thinking is that it will not be preceded by a statement by the Prime Minister. The hon. Gentleman is right that the Prime Minister has made three successive statements to the House, the most recent of which was at the end of last week. He will, of course, be available to answer questions in the House on Wednesday.

**Mr. George Osborne** (Tatton): Will the Leader of the House find time this week to have a debate on the decision of the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on local councillors' expenses? As we know from his own political adviser, it is bad news which the Government obviously do not want to discuss. Should that not be subject to full parliamentary scrutiny?

**Mr. Cook:** As a former councillor, I believe that it is important that councillors should receive the expenses necessary to provide good-quality, democratic local government.

# Orders of the Day

## Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill

*Order for Second Reading read.*

6.52 pm

**The Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs (Mr. John Denham):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I have to confess that the events of recent weeks have given a new perspective and, perhaps, a new sense of proportion to issues that have previously concerned the House. The House will obviously spend a considerable period in the days and weeks ahead on major issues but it is none the less, also our responsibility to continue the normal business of legislation on other matters.

The Bill repeals section 5(2) to (5) of the Football (Disorder) Act 2000, together with a related reference in section 3. The effect will be to continue to enforce without time limit the provision for banning orders on complaint and summary measures relating to detention and referral to the court in the Football Spectators Act 1989. It may be helpful if I remind the House of the reasons why the 2000 Act was introduced last year. Hon. Members who have looked into these matters will know of the association between football disorder and the English domestic game since it became a mass spectator sport at the end of the 19th century. The domestic problem has not gone away, but it has been largely marginalised by an array of legislative and other measures. English football stadiums are now among the safest and most secure in the world.

In recent years, concern has centred primarily on the behaviour of English football fans travelling to matches overseas. In 13 of the last 23 years, more than one serious incident has occurred. Each damaged our national reputation and together they resulted in many thousands of English arrests and deportations.

Prior to the adoption of the 2000 Act, a number of legislative measures were put in place. Each successive Act adjusted and expanded the measures available to the police and courts to tackle the evolving character of football hooliganism, and made a significant impact on domestic hooliganism. However, measures designed to combat English football disorder overseas proved less successful. In the build-up to Euro 2000, orders could only be imposed by the courts following conviction for a football-related offence. The law made a clear and, in many respects, artificial distinction between domestic and international banning orders. There was also provision for the courts to impose orders on the basis of convictions overseas if the requisite international agreement and legal measures were in place.

While a number of such agreements were put in place, the option did not prove fruitful, largely because host countries continually, if understandably, preferred to arrest and deport offenders, rather than pursue costly and time-consuming court proceedings. The reality is that football disorder usually involves rather low-level crime and disorder; its cumulative impact far exceeds its constituent offences. Euro 2000, as everyone knows, provided strong evidence of the reason why the previous measures were flawed. In preparation for it, the Belgian and Dutch authorities prepared a comprehensive and sophisticated security operation, maximised international police co-operation and aimed to minimise the risk posed by England followers. This country co-operated to the utmost extent.

The effectiveness of those preparations was constrained by the legislation, which limited the number of hooligans who could be prevented from travelling from England to follow the English team overseas to about 100 individuals. In spite of extensive precautions, English fans were involved in serious disturbances in Charleroi and Brussels. The measures put in place were effective to the extent that only one of the 965 England followers arrested during the tournament was subject to a banning order imposed following conviction for a football-related offence. However, subsequent police checks revealed that 40 per cent. of those arrested had convictions for offences of violence or public disorder, although not necessarily connected with football.

**Mr. Peter Pike** (Burnley): My right hon. Friend will know that one of the biggest causes of disorder in many football grounds is racism. Does he accept that racism is a factor that we need to look at in the legislation? Will he take this opportunity to say that the House gives its full support to the current campaign to kick racism out of football?

**Mr. Denham:** My hon. Friend is right—we are currently in a 10 or 13-day period in which the premier league is promoting anti-racist campaigning at league grounds. On Saturday I was at St. Mary's stadium in Southampton, where that was given a high profile. I entirely agree that it is important to continue the successful efforts of recent years to tackle racism, which is particularly important at the current time when, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said earlier, people want to exploit any tensions within our society. I am therefore grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the matter.

As I was saying, after the trouble at Euro 2000, it was clear that a substantial number of those arrested had convictions for offences of violence or public disorder, which were not necessarily connected with football. We also found, in line with the established trend, that only one of the 965 arrested was subsequently convicted of an offence following the disturbances. Of course, the disorder caused by England fans at Euro 2000 generated a great deal of criticism. The host countries, other European countries and the international football authorities felt that the United Kingdom had to do more to protect host cities and citizens from English hooligans. UEFA threatened to expel the English team from Euro 2000 if there were any further outbursts of disorder involving English supporters.

In the light of the disorder and the information collected about the perpetrators, the legislation that we are discussing today was introduced to do a number of things. First, it will demonstrate to Governments, police forces and the public across Europe and beyond that the UK is taking effective steps to prevent English troublemakers from travelling to matches overseas. Secondly, it is designed to prevent English football from being banned from world competition. Thirdly, it will provide the police and courts with extensive powers to remove from the scene greater numbers of supporters with a track record of violence and disorder, not necessarily football related; it will remove the on-going anomaly of supporters

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misbehaving overseas in the expectation of avoiding any punishment while abroad and any consequences on their return; and it will deter potential troublemakers from misbehaving and, importantly, others from getting involved and transforming minor incidents into major disorder.

Those considerations led to the Football (Disorder) Act 2000, which introduced four important changes. There was widespread support on both sides of the House for two measures, the first of which abolished the distinction between a ban on attending matches at home and overseas, so that when a court imposed an order, it had the effect of the previous domestic and international banning orders combined. The second measure, which received widespread support on both sides of the House, made passport surrender during specified periods an automatic condition of a banning order. A safeguard was built in to enable the court to waive the condition in exceptional circumstances, and the power of the football banning orders authority, or the police in urgent cases, to grant exceptions was retained.

There were two more controversial measures in the 2000 Act. Section 14B empowered magistrates to impose banning orders on individuals in circumstances other than on conviction for a football-related offence. The complaint process requires the police to satisfy the court that the person before it has caused or contributed to violence and disorder, and that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the making of an order would help to prevent violence or disorder in connection with football matches.

Sections 21A and 21B provided a different route to seeking an order on complaint during control periods—that is, the five-day period prior to an overseas match involving the England or Wales national team or an English or Welsh club side. Section 21A empowered the police to detain an individual for up to four hours, or six hours with the authorisation of an inspector, where a police officer had reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person had caused or contributed to any violence or disorder in the UK or elsewhere, and for believing that imposing a banning order on that person would help to prevent violence or disorder at or in connection with any regulated football matches.

The purpose of the detention is to enable the police to decide whether to issue a section 21B notice, which requires the individual to appear before a magistrates court within 24 hours. In the meantime, the individual is prevented from leaving England and Wales. The magistrates court would then treat the notice as an application for a section 14B banning order on complaint.

It was suggested by some in this House and the other place that sections 14B, 21A and 21B went too far. The Government did not share that perspective, but it was a genuine position for right hon. and hon. Members to hold. That is why the 2000 Act limited the lifespan of the measures. It stated that a report setting out the impact of the Act should be laid before Parliament before the powers could be renewed by affirmative instrument for a further 12 months.

That report was laid before Parliament on 20 June and it concluded with an assessment of the impact of the Act during the period concerned. It concluded that there had been no significant disorder since Euro 2000, notwithstanding a number of potentially high-risk matches; fan behaviour had noticeably improved; the number of troublemakers prevented from travelling to matches had increased significantly; Governments across Europe had welcomed the Act; legislative gaps exposed by the disorder during Euro 2000 had been closed; and importantly, the Act was being applied in a targeted and proportionate way.

**Mr. Dominic Grieve** (Beaconsfield): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. In connection with that report and the subsequent report which he has helpfully provided today, can he tell us where detail can be obtained about the sort of cases in which challenges have been made to section 21B, the duration of those cases, and the number of times a successful challenge has been raised? I note that there are some statistics in the last report that the right hon. Gentleman produced, but is any other information available which could help the House to understand how those who challenged the making of those orders fared?

**Mr. Denham:** I shall be as helpful as I can. The hon. Gentleman will have noticed in the earlier report that some 30 section 21B notices were cited. Those are included in the total number—44—of orders on complaint. About 30 people were stopped under section 21B, and 19 of those were effectively confirmed by the courts. I am searching my notes for the exact figure, and if necessary I shall write to the hon. Gentleman, but roughly speaking, half of those cases were dismissed by the courts and the others were not pursued. It is worth bearing in mind that the great majority of those were connected with the France-England match in Paris in September 2000, and that the legislation came into force on the first day of the control period. It is reasonable to say that people were using the legislation for the very first time.

Most of the cases brought before the courts following the issue of section 21B notices were adjourned and subsequently referred to courts in the subject's area of residence. Responsibility for prosecution was also transferred from the police force issuing the section 21B notice to the force in the subject's area of residence. Inevitably, it took many months for some of the cases to be resolved. When we are in a position to analyse the corresponding set of figures in the run-up to the Munich game, we will see the benefit of a more consistent approach to the use of orders. We will also see that the police learned from the initial experience of how the courts treated evidence placed before them.

**Simon Hughes** (Southwark, North and Bermondsey): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Bob Russell) and I are the only leftovers from the team that played this game in the last Parliament.

I want to pursue the question raised from the Conservative Front Bench. The evidence so far does not justify a continuation of the legislation. First, does the Minister accept that the vast bulk of people who have been prevented from travelling have been prevented after a conviction? That is entirely acceptable to some of us, but it is not acceptable that they should be prevented from travelling after a complaint, where there has been no previous conviction. Secondly, the report issued today shows that in many cases the court proceedings were adjourned, so there was no decision and the people

concerned were unable to travel, without any finding by the court that a banning order should be implemented. That is entirely against what we were told would happen and is unacceptable.

**Mr. Denham:** I regret that the hon. Gentleman takes that view, and I believe that he is mistaken on a key point. My understanding is that all the people who were prevented from travelling to Munich and the earlier matches overseas had convictions for violence or public order offences. Not all those convictions were for football-related violence or public order offences, but the House understands that one of the consequences of the success in recent years in tackling football violence within football stadiums has been that football violence has sometimes moved to locations several miles away from where the matches take place.

Much as it would be nice to believe that in every case that would be recorded by the courts as football-related violence, that is not the reality. The fundamental premise on which the Bill was based was the necessity to be able to take into account violence and public order misconduct, whether or not it was seen as football related. Of course it is true that the majority of banning orders rely on some previous legislation—that was always going to be the case—but we needed to build on what existed in order to close a loophole.

I shall make a point now that I intended to make later. Clearly, there is a considerable amount of video material on the misconduct that occurred in Germany around the Munich match. There was some trouble, and the legislation gives us the ability, I hope, to identify at least some of the ringleaders and participants in that action and to apply for banning orders under the Bill. If the legislation were not in place, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, we would not be able to do that. We would know who was involved and what they had done, we would know that they had participated in acts of violence in Germany, but we would be utterly powerless to prevent them from travelling to another away game. That is what he is advocating, and I believe that he is wrong.

**Mr. Tony Clarke** (Northampton, South): My right hon. Friend concedes that many acts of violence occur far away from football stadiums and are not connected to the game in any way. Given the rise in the number of offences that are categorised as football violence, does he believe that the time is right to recategorise such offences? That would prove that football had indeed cleaned up its act. If the number of football-related offences increases by 8 per cent., but it is conceded that many of those offences were nothing to do with games, occurred many miles from the stadiums, and were not football related, surely our accounting is wrong and football is often being blamed for violence over which it has no control.

**Mr. Denham:** I hear what my hon. Friend says, but I take precisely the opposite view of the evidence. Some of the violence is football related. In common-sense terms, when two sets of fans supporting two different teams arrange to meet for a fight at a venue some distance from a football stadium, what is happening should be described as football related. However, such occurrences do not always turn up as football-related crime in the convictions that are handed down by the courts, which is a potential loophole in our ability to prevent people from travelling.

**Mr. David Drew** (Stroud): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is some evidence to show that football hooligans have begun to infiltrate the non-league game? Will he give an assurance that, if such people are arrested when they are attending non-league games, the normal requirements of the law will apply, just as they would in respect of people attending a premier league or football league game?

**Mr. Denham:** On that point, I hope that my hon. Friend will resist the blandishments of the Liberal Democrats. Somebody who is convicted of violence when attending a non-league game will be covered. The House will remember that two tests are involved. It is not enough merely to have a conviction for violent or public order offences—there must be grounds for persuading the police, in connection with section 21A of the 2000 Act, and subsequently a court, of a reasonable belief that banning somebody from travelling will help to prevent violence or disorder at a football match. In principle, however, my hon. Friend is absolutely right.

It is a matter of record that in July, Standing Committees of this House and the other place approved resolutions extending for 12 months the lifetime of the measures in question. There is no provision for further renewal, so the provisions will lapse unless the relevant sections of the 2000 Act are repealed. The impact report laid before Parliament in June suggested that the Act had had an immediate and positive impact on the behaviour of English football supporters overseas and that the new provisions had become important weapons in the arsenal of tools for tackling hooliganism. We asked Parliament to renew the powers because they were considered essential for the high-risk England-Germany match in Munich on 1 September. I believe that the Act withstood the challenge.

Last week, we placed in the Library a supplementary impact report on the 2000 Act. We made efforts to distribute the report and I understand that Opposition spokespeople have received copies. What does it reveal? The report and its appended summary of risks and preparations outline why the Germany game was high risk and why an extensive multi-agency security operation was necessary. I am told that in the sub-cultural world of football hooliganism, this was regarded as the big one. There is certainly long-standing and intense rivalry between the followers of the two national teams. Violence has been sporadic, but the tension has long been recognised.

The key elements of the security preparations revolved around minimising the number of troublemakers travelling to Munich and their influence on other fans. Close Anglo-German police co-operation was essential and maximising the impact of the powers that we are discussing was even more so. Our objectives were achieved to a very significant degree. I should place on record my congratulations to the German police on the effectiveness of their tactics and their willingness to co-operate with their English counterparts, which was exemplary. There were sporadic clashes between rival fans, but the numbers involved meant that the Munich police could contain the disorder. The German police

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estimate that about 300 English and 450 German hooligans were involved. Of course, those are 300 too many from the English side, but at no point did it seem likely that numbers would be swelled by a significant proportion of the 11,000 English fans who were present in the city.

The mass disorder that might have taken place did not materialise. As a result, we are not today debating a fresh entry in the long catalogue of major disorder involving English football fans and we do not have another blemish on our national reputation. Indeed, the German media and police have placed most of the blame on German hooligans provoking their English counterparts. I am not saying that the problem of English hooliganism has gone away. There is still work to be done, but we have come a long way since Euro 2000.

Overall, 201 people were detained or arrested, most of whom were German nationals. Some 38 English arrests were made for various public order offences. Those arrested have all been released, although four people have been charged and asked to pay a deposit in lieu of a fine, pending court proceedings. Of course, policing styles vary in Europe and it would be unwise to draw conclusions simply on the basis of arrest statistics. However, a simple comparison with Euro 2000, when there were 965 English arrests, mass deportations and much criticism of the behaviour of England supporters, suggests that we have made progress. In connection with a very high-risk match, 38 English arrests were made and there was good behaviour among the vast majority of English supporters—behaviour that has been praised in the German press.

I have no doubt that the disorder that occurred would have been much worse if the measures introduced by the 2000 Act had not been in place. Some 537 known troublemakers were prevented by their banning order conditions from travelling to Munich, compared with the 100 who were prevented from travelling to Euro 2000. Of those people, 492 were banned following conviction for a football-related offence, and the remaining 45 were banned in accordance with the section 14B civil process. All 45 people had convictions for violence or disorder, although they were not necessarily football related. In addition, a further 58 people were prevented from travelling by the courts, in accordance with the section 21B process. Again, all 58 fans have convictions for violence or public order offences.

**Simon Hughes:** The Minister will know from reading the record of our debates on the original Bill about one of the key differences between our parties. The Government argued for a banning order to be permitted without any previous conviction, but we said that such an order was acceptable in relation to football-related convictions and any other appropriate convictions for violence and other offences committed in the preceding 10 years. Does not the evidence that he has provided show that such a measure would have been entirely sufficient? His figures demonstrate that almost all the people who were given banning orders had previous convictions for violence. There is all the difference in the world between banning somebody with a criminal record and banning somebody with no criminal record at all. Does he agree that those are grounds for rethinking the basis of his request to Parliament to extend the Act in exactly the same form as that in which it was introduced?

**Mr. Denham:** Let me explain why I do not agree. It is not entirely surprising that all the banning orders have been given to people with convictions for violence and disorder, bearing it in mind that the police will have wanted to maximise their chances of convincing the courts in this country of their case. For the vast majority of cases, the orders related to convictions given in this country. However, I believe that the possibility of imposing a banning order on somebody who can be shown to have participated in violence, even if he or she has not been convicted, is still necessary. That ability is obviously necessary in relation to the circumstances in Munich. Without it, about 300 troublemakers, by and large, would not have been convicted in German courts. Like many other countries, when Germany had previously been faced with such difficult circumstances it tended to deport people and get them out of the country rather than to hold them for arrest and conviction. It is not certain, but likely, that video or other evidence will enable us to identify individuals who played a leading role in the violence. If we took the hon. Gentleman's view, we would accept that such individuals could travel to future matches despite the fact that they had been seen participating in violence, simply because there was no conviction. That would be a loophole.

The test for the legislation is whether the evidence in the supplementary report shows that it has been used proportionately and in a targeted way. I believe that it does. The hon. Gentleman draws the wrong conclusion from the evidence that has been presented to him this afternoon.

**Jim Sheridan** (West Renfrewshire): I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment on racism. However, there is another "ism" that has not afflicted the English game so far: sectarianism. We appear to be moving towards a British league, and sectarianism in the English game is the last thing we need. Will my right hon. Friend give a commitment to work with all interested agencies, including the clubs that are invited to join the British league, and ensure that they sort out their houses before joining and do not export sectarian baggage?

**Mr. Denham:** In so far as the legislation applies to Scotland, it is the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. Many people—not least my right hon. Friend the Minister for Sport—would want to ensure that the Government considered all the implications of any move towards a British league. If the pattern of football violence changed, I am sure that the Government would wish to keep legislation as well as policing practice under review.

Steps to prevent troublemakers from leaving the country have an impact on policing England fans overseas. There is less chance of fans being treated on the basis of their reputation rather than their behaviour. The Munich police, aided by a United Kingdom police team in the city, adopted a targeted, low friction, early intervention approach, which was praised by independent supporters' groups. The overwhelming majority of fans were able to enjoy their trip to Germany and avoid the troublemakers. I have refrained from mentioning the result until now, but it undoubtedly surpassed their wildest

expectations. Before the 2000 Act, those inclined to cause trouble overseas could do that in the knowledge that there would be little or no impediment to repeating their misbehaviour at future matches abroad. The banning order option is therefore important.

The supplementary impact report, which was laid before both Houses, has been mentioned. It provides a more detailed account of what transpired in Germany.

**Mr. Grieve:** Before the Minister concludes, will he explain why it is necessary to introduce the Bill now rather than waiting until the end of the expiry period for renewal under statutory instrument? That might have provided a better opportunity of gauging its success and whether it was unfair to some individuals.

**Mr. Denham:** The House has sufficient accumulated knowledge from the implementation of the 2000 Act in its first year and the major game against Germany, at which many people expected violence, to make an assessment. Perhaps we can discuss those matters in more detail in Committee, but we believed that there was enough knowledge and experience to introduce the Bill.

As I said earlier, we have shown that the legislation has been used proportionately and in a targeted way, not arbitrarily. Neither personal appearance nor an isolated expulsion, unsubstantiated by accompanying evidence of misbehaviour, would be grounds for detention under section 21A.

When we considered the extension in Committee, there were outstanding challenges under the European convention on human rights and European Community treaty law. Our view that the measures are compliant was recently endorsed in a High Court judgment, rejecting challenges to the 2000 Act. Lord Justice Laws makes it clear in his judgment that the purpose of the banning order is not punitive, but

"to protect the public here and abroad from the evil of football violence and the threat of it."

On the proportionality of the measures, the judgment stated:

"The State was entitled to conclude that very firm measures were justified to confront the various sickening ills of football violence . . . the progressive nature of the succeeding measures from 1986 onwards, and the safeguards clearly established in the 1989 Act demonstrate"

that the measures

"are amply justified in light of EC law and the general law relating to proportionality."

There is compelling evidence for maintaining sections 14B, 21A and 21B on the statute book. They withstood a thorough practical and legal examination in the past 14 months; they would be lost without the Bill.

7.26 pm

**Mr. Dominic Grieve** (Beaconsfield): I welcome the opportunity to debate the matter with the Minister and I thank him for drawing our attention to the paper that was placed in the Library. I discovered it only shortly before the beginning of the debate, but it has been helpful concerning the singular lack of evidence about the operation of the relevant sections of the Football (Disorder) Act 2000.

In opening the debate, the Minister made a comment with which I entirely agreed about the Bill in the context of the international situation. He is right that in comparison with the gravity of some matters that the House must now tackle, the Bill may not appear very serious. However, there is a similarity between it and the other measures that we must consider.

We are debating another example of the House being asked to depart from the normal standards of criminal justice that have applied in this country over many generations. We are being asked to use administrative methods to deal with a particular criminal problem.

Another example, which was much criticised by Labour Members, is the exclusion orders that prevented people from travelling from Northern Ireland to other parts of the United Kingdom. They gave rise to serious anxieties about human rights. Although we are discussing football hooligans, not suspected IRA terrorists, the measure falls into the same category of consideration when we decide whether renewal should occur in the form requested by the Minister.

The Opposition share the Government's aim in the Bill and in the Football (Disorder) Act 2000. It is clearly desirable to check football hooliganism. One of the Minister's most compelling arguments is the example of what happened recently in Germany during the international competition. It is clearly a good sign, and I accept the Minister's comments about the contribution that sections 14 and 21 made to that.

It is worth pointing out that previous Conservative Governments have attempted to work along the same lines. For example, they introduced the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985, the Public Order Act 1986, and the Football Spectators Act 1989, which imposed restrictions for the first time. A previous Conservative Government also introduced the Football (Offences) Act 1991 and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

I am sure that the Minister will acknowledge that the Opposition first advocated restriction orders on unconvicted hooligans in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. We accepted that an exception to the normal rule in relation to criminal law could be made in that case. Indeed, I draw great comfort from the fact that, the issue having been specifically challenged in the courts during the summer, the courts have ruled that there has been no breach of the Human Rights Act 1998. That was the view we took and the view that the Government adopted, so it is cheering that it is the view that the courts have confirmed as being proportionate. However, the then Home Secretary did not agree with our suggestion and consulted.

During the passage of the private Member's Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes), my right hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (David Maclean) again sought to flag the matter up and it was agreed that it was not appropriate for a private Member's Bill. The Government had to give it proper scrutiny.

**Simon Hughes** *rose—*

**Mr. Simon Burns** (West Chelmsford): I would be grateful for clarification. To which Bill is my hon. Friend referring?

**Mr. Grieve:** I am making specific reference to the measure introduced in 1999 by the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey.

**Mr. Burns:** I do not want to cause my hon. Friend any difficulty, but the Bill was mine, not the hon. Gentleman's.

**Mr. Grieve:** My apologies to my hon. Friend are profuse. As I was not in the House at the time, perhaps

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my remarks reflect my having read the specific section of *Hansard* that contains the hon. Gentleman's contribution. I should have remembered that the Bill was my hon. Friend's, as I was present during the passage of the Football (Disorder) Act 2000 and I recall his contributions in relation to it. A bell should have rung in my mind that he was the author of the earlier legislation.

**Simon Hughes:** I must put it on record that, as the hon. Member for West Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) knows, I was trying to intervene to render unto him the honour that he is due for the legislation. I would not have wanted to claim it, although it was a perfectly proper initiative to bring to the House.

**Mr. Grieve:** On that happy note, I return to the point at issue. The Minister rightly pointed out that when the Bill came before the House in summer 2000—I read *Hansard*, including my own contributions on that occasion—the critical issues centred around sections 14 and 21. He would acknowledge, however, that the focus was on section 21 in particular.

Section 14 raised the question of an exception to the criminal law that a system of complaint could be seen to work, although there were considerable anxieties about the standard of proof that should be applied in such circumstances. There were fundamental anxieties in respect of section 21 as to how the Bill would interfere with people's legitimate right to move freely out of the country. They would find themselves arbitrarily stopped and subject to a procedure at an unexpected time, which might cause them great inconvenience. That could be considered to be a serious infringement of their human rights.

The Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that that particular issue has not specifically been the subject of a human rights challenge. As I understand the cases that took place this summer, they centred on the complaints procedure generally and, in some examples, the previous orders that were available.

We must face the fact that the legislation is fairly draconian. In fairness to the Government, they considerably altered the proposals as a result of representations. I recollect that detention was to have lasted 24 hours, but that was reduced to four hours, or six if an inspector wanted and authorised that. We also considered the question of being able to admit in proceedings the acts of a public authority, whatever that might mean. That seemed to be a question of simple administrative convenience, which, as the Minister will acknowledge, raised a genuine problem.

As the Minister said, 965 arrests were made following the events in Belgium, but I remember the Home Secretary acknowledging that the Belgian police accepted that a large number of those arrested would have been guilty of nothing, so the figure provided a poor guide to the level of disturbance and an even poorer guide if it were applied to whether a banning order should be made.

Again, the Government listened and they introduced the notion of a reasonable ground for the constable to detain. Furthermore, the reasons would have to be given in writing, which was not the case previously, and, most notably, we considered the notion of compensation were there to be wrongful detention. The Minister can confirm that. I have no statistics, nor has the House, as to what compensation may have been paid to any individual as a result of the application of section 21. I would be grateful if, through the Minister's advisers, we ascertained whether such compensation has been paid and how much.

**Mr. Denham:** Let me endeavour to help the hon. Gentleman. My understanding is that no compensation has been paid, though I shall check that during the debate.

**Mr. Grieve:** I thank the Minister for that answer. That brings me to the nub of the issues that we have to face. He has acknowledged—indeed, he knows—that just before the summer recess we renewed the order for a further 12 months. I know from reading *Hansard* that points were made about the opportunity that more time would offer to assess the impact of those draconian measures.

For reasons that I do not fully understand, the Minister has decided on the back of the success in Germany that the time has come to introduce a completely new initiative and get rid of the sunset clause so as to make the measures permanent. Our anxiety is based not on the principles on which the Government operated—indeed, when the Bill came before the House last year, we understood those principles—but on the fact that we face an astonishing paucity of information about how, in practice, the legislation affects individuals.

In an intervention, the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey made the point that few people have been affected by the measures, saying that most orders arise from convictions and asking whether that was not a reason for not allowing the measures to proceed? I do not entirely agree. If a small number of people are being caught properly by the system, and bearing in mind that it takes only a small number of people to initiative violence at football matches or in their vicinity, that may be persuasive and good reason for maintaining the legislation as it stands. Against that, however, we must assess how the legislation affects individuals.

In that regard, all that we have to go on is the latest document, and I must tell the Minister that it makes worrying reading. It notes that there were 80

"Section 21A Police Detentions at England and Wales Exit Points"

and that 13 people were detained and released to travel. So, for starters, 13 people who were detained, presumably for between four and up to six hours, were released, having been inconvenienced, to continue their journey. Section 21B notices were issued to 67 people.

Then we come to the bland statement that is the only information that the House has to go on as to how one of the measures passed by Parliament is affecting people's liberties. Under the heading "Outcome of Court Proceedings Prompted By Issue of Section 21B Notices", the document notes that 36 banning orders were imposed, nine banning orders were refused and that 22 court proceedings were adjourned with a travel ban temporarily upheld.

I assume that those statistics are right. I mean no criticism of the Minister when I say that it does not need a great mathematics exercise to see that the position has been shifting. Getting an updated position for the House to consider is difficult and this latest example seems to be as close as we shall get to one. However, the statistics

relate to only one match. We do not have full statistics relating to the whole period so that we can make a complete assessment. We have simply to consider the German experience of the Germany-England match. It appears that some 31 people—

**Mr. Denham:** The hon. Gentleman says that we have no other statistics. In my speech I referred to a report that was laid before the House in June which also includes statistics. It is true that more recent figures are broken down in more detail, and I shall endeavour to provide him with a consolidated set of figures before we reach Committee.

**Mr. Grieve:** Again, I am grateful to the Minister. He is right: the earlier document does include some broad statistics, but they are not very informative. We are told that 44 orders were made on complaint and that 30 section 21B notices were issued preventing travel and initiating on complaint banning-order proceedings. However, we do not know the outcomes. If I am wrong about that, any information that the Minister can provide will be gratefully received. I have certainly searched.

**Mr. Denham:** I gave the hon. Gentleman that information in response to his intervention earlier in the debate, but I should be happy to write to him to give him all the facts.

**Mr. Grieve:** I thank the Minister. I made a note of what he said, but before I came into the Chamber the House did not have that full information. That is a source of anxiety because these processes were the subject of much comment last year, and I have re-read the comments that I made on 17 July 2000 at column 123. There had been a lot of debate involving the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, the right hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), about how ponderous the system would be. How long would it last? To what extent would people be dragged into an administrative and bureaucratic system that required many court attendances and that would interfere with their liberty and put a taint on them until it was resolved? The then Home Secretary took the view, which he was fully entitled to take, that that might be a price worth paying. However, he believed that, as the system bedded in, there were unlikely to be many problems. He seemed to believe that they could all be dealt with fairly expeditiously.

The problem is not that the matter has not been dealt with expeditiously but that we simply do not have the relevant information. Yet the Minister is asking the House today to extend those measures to make them permanent. What is made permanent in the House is difficult to undo later.

**Simon Hughes:** The hon. Gentleman did not quite get to the end of his maths. Does he agree that, on the figures that we all have—those in the report that we were given today on the England-Germany game in Munich—the totals show that the majority of cases against people initially detained were not upheld. While I take the point that we do not need a majority to win the argument, in the case of the majority the intervention appears not to have been justified in terms of their loss of liberty.

**Mr. Grieve:** The hon. Gentleman is right if one considers the total figures for those actually stopped at exit points.

It is difficult to know precisely what went on. If people were detained for only 15 minutes to check their identity, the House might feel that that was a price worth paying, but if people were detained for up to six hours, the House might take a different view. The House's real problem is that it is being asked to take an important decision nearly a full parliamentary Session before it needs to be taken and with what appears to be remarkably little information.

I do not wish to take up much more of the House's time. The issues fall within a narrow compass and the House will have to come to a decision. The Minister said that some of the points can be cleared up in Committee and I hope that they can. Given the content of the Bill, I anticipate that the Committee stage will be fairly short. Unless the Minister or the Committee Chairman is prepared to extend a certain amount of indulgence to those who wish to table probing amendments to ascertain exactly how the Bill will work in practice, we could easily find ourselves back in this Chamber on Third Reading no better informed than we are now about how the legislation will work.

The fact that few orders have been used is a good thing—the fewer the better. Any change to the ordinary course of criminal justice is undesirable. However, the fact that only a few orders have been used does not mean that the rights of a few should be forgotten. I remain unconvinced and undecided whether the time has come, in the light of the good results of the Germany match, to endorse the legislation until kingdom come. In those circumstances, the Conservative party will not oppose Second Reading. However, unless during the passage of the Bill, which is likely to be brief and rapid, some cogent and proper evidence is presented to us on how the legislation will affect individuals, there must be a serious question mark over whether the Government should be able to carry the Bill through without opposition.

I hope that the Minister who winds up the debate will take the opportunity to set out clearly the detail of how the Bill will work. If that cannot be done today, it must be done before the Committee stage starts. I urge the Government to give us an opportunity in Committee to look at these matters; otherwise, we shall do a disservice to civil liberties in this country for what appears to be a bad reason—that there has been a successful football match and that therefore we can introduce something now that could wait another nine months.

I hope that the Minister will take my comments in good part, because the Opposition's purpose is to be co-operative on this matter. We fully understand what the Government seek to achieve, but that is not a good reason to impose on individuals a bureaucratic system and process that ultimately does not treat them fairly.

7.48 pm

**Mr. Clive Betts** (Sheffield, Attercliffe): In general, I welcome the Bill and the fact that we are renewing it on a permanent basis.

I was interested in what the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Grieve), had to say. I accept that there is a trade-off and that the process of this legislation will on occasions catch individuals who, if allowed to attend an England game abroad, would cause no problems. However, we must recognise that, as well as those people's civil rights, there are the civil rights of many people who live abroad, whose countries England

*[Mr. Clive Betts]*

fans have visited, provoking mayhem among the local population and attacking individuals and property. Legislation to stop those people travelling abroad will affect the hard core of English fans who cause those difficulties.

The Opposition must recognise that we are talking about a minority of English fans, but a significant minority who have inflicted violence and attacked others when they have gone abroad. Within that minority there is probably a smaller, very hard-core minority of people who instigate, lead and provoke the trouble. This legislation is targeted at those people in particular.

I attended a number of matches in Euro 96, the World cup in 1998 and the European championships in Holland in 2000, and I witnessed the completely different attitudes of fans. The approach of many foreign fans who come to this country is totally different from the past behaviour of England fans abroad.

I was in Sheffield during the 1996 European championships when we had the Danish supporters. No fans are more enthusiastic about supporting their country than the Danes. They did not hold back from drinking: they drank Sheffield pubs dry in the city centre, but that did not provoke attacks or antagonism towards the citizens of Sheffield or the football fans of other teams. Their support and enthusiasm was totally directed at backing their team to the full.

Unfortunately, as I have witnessed at first hand, all too often when some England fans go abroad the support for their team goes hand in hand with xenophobia and hatred of the country they are in and its citizens. It is revolting and nasty to behold. It comes out in chanting and in the personal dealings they have with the people of that country when they are in a bar, when they talk to passers-by or respond to ordinary citizens.

I was in Marseille for the England game against Tunisia in the 1998 World cup. I do not blame English fans completely for what happened, because there was much provocation from some of the local supporters of north African origin. Nevertheless, a significant number of England fans were prepared to be provoked and a small number of them led the attack against that provocation. Far from the delights of mixing with the Danes in Sheffield in 1996, my experience of that game was of hiding under a table in a café as glasses and chairs were thrown. I just missed the CS gas, as the café owner recognised that some English supporters were not there to cause trouble and pulled us into the café before he closed the shutters to avoid the police response to the attacks by the other England fans. That was an absolute disgrace, and it is no wonder that the people of that city wish that English fans had not descended on them.

I remember going to a game in the early 1990s when Sheffield Wednesday ventured into Europe—it was probably the last time it will do so for an awfully long time. After the game I asked some people in a bar whether they went to the match. They said, "No, we were frightened about what English fans would do. A couple of years ago another English team came whose fans wrecked the town." What an appalling reputation we have. People were frightened to go to their own home football club to see a game because of what English fans might do to their town. Possible unfair action under this legislation against one or two individuals should be balanced against the behaviour of English fans abroad in the past and the desire of people in countries where England are to play for Parliament to take firm action to control that small minority and to prevent them from going abroad.

I support the legislation. There is a balance of civil rights to be made, and I believe that we have got it just about right. We shall discuss this matter again in the future, but it would be wrong at this stage to weaken the legislation and to change the balance to the detriment of the people of the cities where England are playing and of the vast majority of English fans who want to go abroad to enjoy the game.

Many English fans who go abroad are also affected by the appalling behaviour of the minority of supporters who cause difficulties. I went to see the England-Romania game in Toulouse during the 1998 World cup. I walked through the main square with a friend and we started talking in a low voice about the appalling chanting and behaviour of some English fans in the square. I did not realise that someone was listening to our conversation. He confronted me and was joined by two or three of his friends, who started accusing us of not supporting England and of supporting the IRA. They accused us of all sorts of things because we dared to challenge—in a conversational way, as we were not speaking to them—the appalling xenophobic, racist chanting. I was assaulted. The person would not listen to any comment, and when we tried to walk away he started throwing punches.

That was an England fan responding to another England fan. Such people are not merely xenophobic and racist—they support the British National party and its views—in the attitude they take towards foreigners when they go abroad, they also make life hell for many ordinary English fans who go with the team. To prevent the small minority of troublemakers from going abroad is right for that reason as well.

The target of the legislation is right. I refer back to the proposal that every football supporter in this country should have a membership card that they must show before they are allowed into a football game. That was the policy of the Conservative Government when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. That proposal was wrong, because it tried to criminalise all football fans and to make them responsible for what was going on in the game. It did not target the individuals who cause the real difficulties. The Bill is different because it pinpoints and attacks those people who are likely to cause problems and prevents them from doing so.

What we have done in the game in this country, which must be reflected when English fans go abroad, is to make the grounds more welcoming for the ordinary fan, so that more women and children go to matches. When such an atmosphere is created and grounds are full, it is much more difficult for the yobs, the hard cases and the racists to engage in their activities. That has happened in the premiership, as we have "decriminalised" English football. People who go to a game are there to enjoy themselves. We have tried to target the hard core minority, and to make the game more acceptable and more welcoming for families.

I was in Eindhoven for the European championships in 2000. Many of the fans were women and children—families. The attitude before the game had a different feel.

The reason there were no problems was that the activities of the hard core, who were still there to some extent, were diluted as a result of the different approach that was taken.

I agree with my right hon. Friend about the response of the police in the game against Germany in Munich. Co-operation between police in this country and police abroad is vital. Much of the Bill is based on the evidence and knowledge that our police have, which can be transferred to foreign police forces, so that they can be on the look out for people who are likely to cause problems.

I draw a contrast between the response of the police in Munich and the events in Marseille. The French police were hopeless. The violence should never have happened, but the police must have known that there would be trouble with English fans in a city such as Marseille, especially as some of the locals were also looking for trouble. When we walked to that café that night there was no sign of police officers on the streets or on the street corners. There were a dozen or 20 police officers grouped together in riot vans at 300 yd or 400 yd intervals, but they were there to police the riot when it happened and not to control the situation and monitor the crowd to prevent trouble from breaking out.

In Eindhoven, the Dutch police were in groups of two here and three or four there. They were on the spot, giving a clear signal to fans about what would happen if trouble erupted. There were small disturbances from time to time, but the police were immediately on the scene from 10 yd away. They talked to the fans beforehand—it probably helped that most of them spoke English. They showed that they were in control of the situation and were going to police it effectively and reasonably but strongly right from the beginning.

I talked to the British police after that event, and they drew a contrast between the way in which the Dutch police had behaved in Eindhoven and the approach of the Belgian police in Charleroi, who saw their job as that of policing riots rather than preventing trouble in the first place. There was no excuse for the violence, but it is important to recognise that our police have, by and large, got it right. They have changed their approach from the 1980s. They are around in numbers on street corners outside the grounds, and they mix with the crowd rather than try to control trouble once it has broken out. It is important that we pass that approach on to foreign police forces.

My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) spoke earlier about racism in this country, and about misbehaviour of that kind at football grounds. I applaud what the Football Association and football clubs are trying to do about awareness of racism, but I suspect on occasion that some of the campaigns are simply that. I have seen stewards stand by at football grounds, observe racist chanting, and do nothing. I wonder how many stewards who will attend English football matches next weekend will have been given any kind of racial awareness training. How many will have been taught about legislation against racist chanting, and how many actions have been taken against people for racist chanting at football matches over the past 12 months? My guess is that the number of actions is in single figures.

I believe that football clubs are very good at campaigns, but—perhaps—not nearly as good at some of the practicalities as they should be.

8 pm

**Simon Hughes** (Southwark, North and Bermondsey): I am very happy, in some ways, to follow the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), although I cannot follow him on his round-Europe tour of England away games. My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Bob Russell) said that Sheffield clearly looks after its MPs; during the last Parliament, the Labour Whips Office clearly looked after its Whips slightly better than some other colleagues. I own up to watching one England away game—the Finland qualifying match, which turned out to be deadly dull, but very calm. If the hon. Gentleman wants to give us tips on how to ensure that we all have tickets for the World cup finals next year, however, I shall be open to offers after the debate.

As the Minister implied, following last month's horrendous events and statements on the international emergency, on Parliament's return we are back to business as usual—and rightly so. In a way, it is also right that we are debating football, our national game. I want, therefore, to say something before we deal with the bad side of football, which is created not by supporters but by hooligans. The hooligans are not fans but people who tarnish the name of football and the enjoyment of many supporters, as Members throughout the House agree. On behalf of some of my colleagues, and, I would guess, the whole House, I want first to share the joy that I feel about one development.

When we left for our summer holidays, it was pretty unlikely that England would qualify for the World cup, but a phenomenal game in Munich exceeded all expectations—Michael Owen and Beckham, among others, played out of their skins. That was followed by a home game, which we all watched with growing fear and disbelief until David Beckham, to his huge personal credit, again redeemed us in the final few seconds.

On behalf of the House, I thank the England team. In particular, I thank its captain not just for his performance on the pitch but for his role-model performance in response to questions and in interviews too. Under his captaincy, we have a team to be proud of and we hope for great success in Korea and Japan next year. The finals will take place while Parliament is sitting, although we may have a quick half-term break. If colleagues think that they can swan off to the far east for four weeks—with a couple of honourable exceptions—they have another think coming.

Sadly, however, the debate is not on the merits of football and its great successes and prospects but on the nasty things that happen around its periphery. In that context, as the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Grieve) reminded us, we return to a core debate that has been a thread running through what other Members have said today. I refer to the issue of how we are to deal with the minority of criminals, or troublemakers, without removing the liberties of the law-abiding citizens who constitute the majority. That debate is very similar to the debate about how to deal with terrorists. This question, happily, is in a way less serious—it is on a smaller scale—but it involves the same set of issues, and it is very important.

We have gained another addition to the evidence and experience that were available to us before the summer. The Minister rightly reminded us that in July both Houses had short debates about whether to extend the current

*[Simon Hughes]*

legislation for a year—from August this year until August next year. All parties in both Houses agreed that, whatever our views on substance and the core of the legislation, there was logic in continuing it for that second year, which we permitted when we passed the Bill a year ago.

Since then, England's only away game was in Munich. I was grateful to receive the report that arrived today, although its arrival was pretty much at the eleventh hour. We now have to make decisions.

I note that, in the Queen's Speech, the Government committed themselves to the introduction of legislation to extend the life of the Football (Disorder) Act 2000. I am aware of the semantics, but the wording did not refer to making the Act permanent. I agree with what Members of both other parties said when we last debated the matter. Our view is that there may be an argument for extending the life of the Act, but we are absolutely not persuaded that there is an argument for making it permanent—which, in relation to banning orders on complaint and without conviction, is something that the Minister proposes.

Since we last debated these matters, we have also seen a short report and press release from the National Criminal Intelligence Service. I pay tribute to NCIS and to Bryan Drew and the team, whom I have met. I also pay tribute to those who now do the football intelligence work, very well and very professionally. They collaborate efficiently with their colleagues in other European countries to ensure that when there are away games, or when teams come here, we gain the maximum benefit from police intelligence and experience the minimum destruction.

I echo what was said by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe. There is all the difference in the world between the way in which some countries have policed football games and the way in which others have done so. Some have policed them extremely well. Everyone seems to agree that the Dutch are pre-eminent in that regard: they appear to have understood that the psychology requires not confronting people at the last minute, but ensuring that police and people work together and see themselves as being on the same side. That is a lesson that we need to learn for the purpose of policing games in this country as well as abroad.

Let me mention a local experience. I chaired a meeting in my constituency the other day that dealt with precisely this issue. We are just over the boundary from the New Den—Millwall's ground. The team has been promoted. It is a very good team with very good supporters: it is a very good club, on its way up to the premier league. In the meantime, as with all clubs, there are a few people who attend matches to cause trouble. We have to take steps to manage that.

Some members of the public expressed strong views to the police. They said, for instance, "Please do not always turn up in large numbers in riot gear at the beginning. Sometimes you wind up people who are on the periphery." They did not mean the hard core who would turn up anyway, or those who—as the Minister said—meet three miles away and get in touch, on mobile phones, with the supporters of the other team in order to arrange a ruck somewhere near the ground a bit later on. Nor did they mean those aged 14, 15 and 16 who hang around for a bit of after-school trouble. Those whom they meant are often 30, 35 or 40. They should certainly know better, and we must all make sure that we deal with them both at home and abroad.

As the hon. Member for Beaconsfield said, this is hardly a large Bill. It contains three clauses, but only one is substantive, and even it constitutes a fairly small amendment. The Bill will not, therefore, occupy a huge amount of time in Committee. It does, however, raise the two important issues left over from our debate a year ago. I will not repeat that we had to work pretty hard against the clock to get the Bill into anything like reasonable shape following the outlandish proposals advanced by the Government at the outset. We are reminded that they originally wanted a 24-hour detention power, which was mercifully reduced to four hours with a "plus two" option to bring it up to six. There was meant to be the ability to detain people with no record of violence, and there was no sunset provision. Following guillotined debates in both Houses, we managed to secure some improvements.

The procedure was disgraceful, as the Bill was pushed through against the clock. In the Commons, there was no separation between Committee and Report. There were huge complaints in the Lords, as an undertaking given to Cross Benchers that they would be able to table amendments on Third Reading was not honoured. Nobody considered the resulting legislation successful. Even Ministers did not argue strongly that it was good legislation.

Lord Harris of Greenwich, then the Liberal Democrat Chief Whip in the Lords, who has sadly since died, said:

"It is difficult to understand in this extremely badly drafted, badly thought-through Bill what happens to Irish citizens who also have British passports."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 July 2000; Vol. 616, c. 470.]

My noble Friend Lord Phillips of Sudbury said:

"This Bill came to us in a tawdry and inadequate state and leaves us in that condition. There has not been a single major concession to the fears expressed not just by the Opposition but from the Government Benches."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 July 2000; Vol. 616, c. 475.]

My noble Friend Lord McNally, who led for us in the Lords, made similar comments. The Bill hardly got a ringing endorsement. On all the major Divisions, although the Government obviously carried the day in the Commons, there was support from all three major parties for amendments designed to change the nature of the Bill.

Liberal Democrat Members, along with Conservative Members and others, do not intend to force a Division on Second Reading. We will seek to amend the Bill after that. Our position has consistently been that there is no case so overwhelming that it could justify a banning order being applied where there is no previous conviction. It is perfectly reasonable for the Minister to argue that one may want to take action on video evidence of people misbehaving on the streets of Munich, even if that has not led to a conviction, but the figures published in the two reports and in parliamentary answers in both Houses show that all but one of those who have had banning orders confirmed by the courts have previous convictions for violence.

We want to amend the Bill to allow convictions not only for football-related violence but for any violence to be the basis for an application for a banning order,

but there is all the difference in the world between a conviction for violence or public order offences and an assumption of guilt without a conviction.

**Mr. Denham:** For the hon. Gentleman's information, the legislation as it stands allows non-football-related violence to be taken into account, so there is no need for such an amendment.

**Simon Hughes:** Exactly. We want to retain that provision and not to have the additional power to make banning orders where there is no relevant conviction.

**David Wright** (Telford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it has been the practice in some countries to remove English and other football supporters without charging them? Do we not need some mechanism to stop those people travelling in future?

**Simon Hughes:** That was the Minister's argument, but the answer is not as simple as the hon. Gentleman thinks. After the Charleroi games in Belgium, many people were shipped home who had committed no offence. One should not be able to pray in aid in seeking a banning order the fact that a foreign country's authorities prevented people from seeing a match, even though they were not convicted of any crime. There is also a question about whether video footage of people misbehaving abroad should be able to be prayed in aid. There is an argument for that, but there is a stronger argument for ensuring that people who commit offences, no matter where, should be nicked, charged, prosecuted and convicted. The best evidence that someone is a hooligan is a conviction for hooliganism.

It is a dangerous road to go down to allow people's liberties to be taken away when there has been no conviction. We will have the same debate in relation to terrorism. In the criminal justice system in which I was brought up, liberties are normally restricted only after a conviction has been secured in a court, not when video footage or allegations suggest that someone may or may not be guilty.

As the hon. Member for Beaconsfield said, we are considering the Bill only one year and three months after the original legislation completed its passage through the House, and one year and two months after it reached the statute book. The present Act runs until the end of August next year, after the friendlies and the World cup. It is premature to make the judgment now. In their manifesto, the Government said that they wanted to extend the life of the legislation but not to make it permanent.

In considering Lords amendments in July 2000, the Minister's predecessor said that he was willing to contemplate a sunset clause for a longer period, as well as annual renewal. We propose, as a concession in the Government's direction, that the legislation should lapse after a maximum of five years and that it should have an annual renewal if we think that the evidence justifies it.

I will happily talk to Conservative Front Benchers and I hope that we can agree that we must be able to have periodic reviews of such legislation on the basis of the evidence. That will mean that we can take into account the points that have been made about evidence from abroad, but if it appears, nine months from now, that almost every single person who has been the subject of a banning order has previous convictions, that will be a strong argument for allowing detention or banning orders only where there are such convictions.

This is a serious matter, because we never envisaged that people would be detained and taken to a court that effectively precluded them from going to a game even though it never decided that there was evidence that they should not go. That is a separate matter from having a temporary banning order when a case has not been concluded.

My colleague in the Scottish Parliament, the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Justice, is responsible for the legislation in Scotland, but we did not manage to iron out the anomaly that if one leaves from a Scottish port to go to a game in England, the law does not apply.

We will debate emergency legislation on terrorism, and there is a logical argument for passing not specific legislation on football, but legislation that deals with people who have committed violent offences and may be violent abroad, irrespective of whether that violence is related to football. We should also consider such matters in the context of public order.

I think—civil servants will know this better than I do—that there are now eight recent football-related measures, and they ought to be pulled together so that we have one coherent football-related Act. We left the complicated issue of whether to accept convictions abroad unresolved during the previous debate.

I shall end on a point that unites us: we agree that one of the troubles in this country, especially in England, has been not only that we have been far too violent at home as a nation and as a people, but that we have often exported our violence abroad, to the disrepute of our country. We must all work together, regardless of our differences on the Bill, to reduce violence in Britain, especially that caused by alcohol, and to ensure that we restore our reputation as not only good sports, but peaceful sports supporters, and—who knows?—we might even become more successful, although we appear to be doing relatively well now, for which we are very grateful.

8.21 pm

**Mr. Stephen Hepburn** (Jarrow): The Minister referred in his opening remarks to the recent tragedy in America and said that it puts this debate into perspective. Football is a beautiful game, but at the end of the day it is still only a game. We are debating the Bill tonight because some people view football as more than a game; they use it as a disguise that enables them to get away with their criminal activities by hiding in crowds. Of course, by going among the genuine football fans—I am one, as are other hon. Members who have spoken tonight—those morons cause havoc and hide behind the various team colours.

Is it not a disgrace that, on a day when the House heard statements on international terrorism, we find ourselves discussing football hooliganism? We are all ashamed of those cowardly thugs who masquerade as supporters. We can only draw a comparison between those cowards and the brave young men in the forces who are currently on the verge of fighting terrorism abroad. Some older people in my constituency ask, "Why don't you bring back national service, because that will tackle the hooligans?" That would be the worst thing to do because those cowards should not besmirch the great uniform of the armed forces.

*[Mr. Stephen Hepburn]*

The Bill has been introduced for two reasons, to which the Minister alluded earlier. First, it is intended to protect our national game, which is loved by fans up and down the country. None of us, whether or not we are football fans, will ever forget the shameful images screened on our televisions during France 98 and Europe 2000. We must not forget that those images nearly led to a ban on the English team and clubs from all future European competitions.

Secondly, we must protect the good reputation of our country and its citizens abroad. The sight of hooligans wearing our national colours and rioting in the streets of foreign capitals damages our standing as a nation not only in Europe but all over the world, because those scenes are beamed via satellite to Australia, the far east and America. Such scenes cause lasting damage, so I am delighted that the joint action to tackle hooliganism taken by the Football Association and the Government following those disgraceful television scenes seems to be having an early impact, as was shown in the recent England game.

The FA acted responsibly by disbanding the England Members Club, which in many people's opinion became a haven for English thugs travelling abroad under the guise of being decent English fans. By intermingling with decent fans, the hooligans slip into European countries and do their damage. The new Englandfans travel club, which the FA has step up, should stop that. By carrying out stringent checks on its members, it will be more difficult for bogus fans to get tickets to travel to international games. Of course, the changes introduced by the FA would not be enough on their own to stop a determined hooligan, so the Government need to act decisively if we are to avoid a repeat of France 98 and Euro 2000. That is even more important now that we are facing the qualifiers for the World cup in 2002.

Hard action was needed, and hard action was taken. Concerns have been expressed tonight and by civil liberty groups that the Government's measures are too draconian, but most people in my constituency, whether or not they are football fans, would not call them draconian; they would call them common sense. Long before such banning orders were introduced, my constituents were asking, "When on earth will you stop those thugs travelling abroad willy-nilly, ruining our international reputation?" The ability to issue banning orders for non-football-related offences was well received.

The test of the new policy of the Government and the FA was always going to be the vital Germany *v.* England World cup clash. In the run-up to the game, 500 fans were prevented from travelling abroad and eight people were arrested at various airports throughout the United Kingdom. It must be stressed that those people were not just randomly rounded up and prevented from travelling; they were known troublemakers, who had no interest in football at all, other than using it as a cover for their criminal activities. The outcome was a brilliant England victory, almost free of violence. A small number of German hooligans, not English fans, were blamed for the small amount of violence that took place. That would not have been the case if the orders had not been in place and English fans could have travelled, willy-nilly, and been infiltrated by the thugs.

Although Parliament is involved in solving the international crisis, it is important not to forget domestic issues such as hooliganism at our domestic games. Hooligans, of course, hide behind team colours wherever they are—whether in the United Kingdom, or when travelling abroad under England team colours. The introduction of closed circuit television at grounds, police firmness and other actions taken by clubs have moved the violence away from football grounds to shopping centres, railway stations and pubs. However, we know that the violence still occurs. More than 3,000 arrests were made at football fixtures last year, and we need to stamp out such violence if we are to protect the glittering image of the premiership. With all due respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Clarke), who is a director of Northampton Town football club, we must remember that the reputations of the other clubs in the other English leagues need to be protected.

The measures in the Bill have been tried and tested in the harshest circumstances and have proved to be a success, but I have a word of caution that I hope the Minister will take on board. We cannot be left to act alone. Football hooliganism is not just an English disease; it happens in other parts of the world and, sometimes in European countries, at a far greater level. Although foreign Governments do not condone hooliganism within their countries, they take a far more lenient attitude than we do. If we are to stamp out the problem altogether, we must take a joint European approach.

The Bill's provisions are measured and targeted. They have made a difference already, and they will make a difference in future. However, there is no room for complacency. We must always protect the one thing that is important: the crown jewel of sport in this country and the world that is our soccer.

8.29 pm

**Mr. Simon Burns** (West Chelmsford): Members on both sides have said that the Bill is extremely modest. If one strips out the standard provisions, such as the commencement date and the clause on expenses, one is left with a simple clause that, on the face of it, appears extremely modest. However, when one studies in depth the Bill and the amendments that it seeks to make to previous legislation, one realises just how significant and far reaching the Government's proposals are.

The Government are seeking to extend—in effect, for ever—the provisions that were contained in the Football (Disorder) Act 2000 and that had a time limit. I have heard the reasons for that and I must confess from my knowledge of the background that I have a slightly different perspective. When I introduced a Bill in 1998, I was united with the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey), in that I wanted my Bill to contain precisely the proposals that we are now debating and that will remain in place for as long as the legislation is on the statute book.

I considered many other provisions in my Bill extremely worth while and badly needed in helping to tackle a pressing problem that was constantly dragging the reputation of English football, in particular, and this country into the gutter. I felt that that problem could no longer be tolerated. However, as I said in the Committee considering my Bill, I concluded that the mechanism of a

private Member's Bill was not the right one to put on the statute book highly contentious measures that struck at the heart of civil liberties. I argued that the Government should introduce them in their own legislation and be backed by their in-built majority in the House. When I decided to introduce amendments in Committee, I thought that I had a deal with the Government that they would introduce such legislation. Ultimately, they did and I supported them.

There is another discrepancy in the accounts given of the history of this Bill, and that is the view that the extension of the legislation is a natural conclusion. Labour Members' remarks on the Bill's time scale and the decision-making processes involved do not quite square with the facts. I do not want to strike a particularly discordant note, but the fact is that the then Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), was desperate, as parliamentary time was running out, to get the Football (Disorder) Act 2000 on the statute book before the summer recess. He wanted the powers in that Act to be in place in time for the England *v.* France match to be played at the beginning of September that year.

That Act contained highly contentious provisions and was open ended in its effect. The Government were concerned that they would either lose it in another place or not get it through before the summer recess, so they wisely and sensibly compromised. In effect, they bowed to the pressure coming particularly from Members of the other place and they introduced a sunset clause.

We are now 12 months down the line and it is logical and consistent that the Government should come to the House with this modest and far-ranging Bill. It is right that the state should have the powers necessary to deal with this problem. It should have them for as long as the legislation remains in force and until any future Parliament may have a change of mind and reverse the decision of this Parliament and of the previous one that approved the 2000 Act.

I do not have a problem with the legislation, because for far too long this country has had to tolerate the inane, asinine and disgraceful behaviour of a very small minority of mindless thugs and hooligans. It is an insult to football supporters to call those people football supporters, because most of them are not. Life has moved on and they are criminals and thugs. Like leeches, they cling to the game to advance their agendas, whether that is to engage in simple mindless violence or, equally seriously, to further the criminal interests of those who are involved in organised crime and who latch on to the game and the crowds who attend football matches as law-abiding citizens. This state needs to take decisive and, I accept, draconian action, because we have had to put up with such behaviour for far too long.

One other thing concerns me. Of course we have a duty to protect the civil liberties of the minority, but we also have a duty to protect the civil liberties of the majority—the honest, decent and law-abiding citizens, and their families and young children, who simply want to go out for an afternoon or evening of entertainment to see two football teams opposing each other for 90 minutes at the highest levels of sportsmanship. For far too long and too often, the civil liberties of the majority have been trodden on remorselessly by the minority. There comes a time when we have to stop being "goody two shoes", bending over backwards to protect the interests of the minority, and say, "Enough is enough. We have given you your chances. You will not reform, so we are going to act to stamp out or minimise the continuing behaviour that causes so much misery and so many problems for our national sport." That is why I support what is happening and what is proposed.

The Government have the majority that they require to win any Division on the Bill. I hope that noble Members in another place pay close attention to the strength of the will of the House, which will be demonstrated if we have to vote, and to our will as demonstrated last year, because we still have a problem. If one studies the statistics, it is clear that the number of arrests fell between 1992–93 and 1999–2000, mostly as a result of a dramatic decline in football violence inside stadiums. That happened for a variety of reasons—partly because of policing and stewarding and partly because of intelligence gathered. I join the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) in paying tribute to the work of the police and their intelligence network, because they do a fantastic job.

In 2000–01, there has been a rise in the number of arrests—a relatively small one, but still a rise. If one includes the number of arrests from European club competitions and at international fixtures, the total is significant. There have been 4,162 arrests, of which 301 were at FA cup matches, 160 at Worthington cup matches, 35 at England home matches and 80 at England away matches. Since 1997, there has also been an increase in violent football-related offences, such as affray, running on to the pitch, racist chanting, throwing missiles and assault. I find those figures disturbing. Arrests for the offence of affray, for example, increased between 1996–97 and 2000–01, from 19 to 165; that is a significant increase. For the throwing of missiles, arrests increased from 11 to 107; arrests for assault increased from 19 to 137 and for violent disorder from 23 to 85. Those statistics are all for violent crime. Interestingly, however, the number of arrests for drink-related offences has fallen. That is encouraging, but the increase in arrests for violence in its different manifestations is a cause for concern and further illustrates the need and justification for the Bill.

The number of arrests for racist and indecent chanting has also risen significantly. Is that because such episodes of disgraceful behaviour are happening more frequently, or because the law has been systematically tightened up and the FA and others have sought to highlight the problem and introduce constructive and workable ways of minimising it? If the latter is the case, that is a positive step forward; but if the former, it is disturbing.

In conclusion, we cannot afford to pussyfoot around. I respect the views held by others on this matter, but we must concentrate on the civil liberties and rights of the majority and give them the protection that they richly deserve, which for too long has been threatened and taken away from them by the activities of the minority. For that reason, I believe that the Bill, however unpalatable it may be to some, is the right way forward. I hope that it becomes law during this parliamentary. Session, providing the authorities with another weapon to tackle a social disease that has bedevilled this country for far too long.

8.44 pm

**Andy Burnham** (Leigh): A number of hon. Members have made good points tonight, particularly the hon. Member for West Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). I will not

*[Andy Burnham]*

cover the same ground in the course of my observations, but as I was an adviser to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport during the Euro 2000 tournament and, before that, to the Government's football taskforce, I hope that I can bring a useful perspective and some new observations to our proceedings.

I speak with 20 years' experience of following Everton football club, home and away. I have been to many England games over the years, including the matches at France 98 and Euro 2000, and saw at first hand the incidents that provoked the Football (Disorder) Act 2000 and which the Bill is intended to confront.

Some Members—most notably the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes)—have expressed concern about the civil liberties implications of the measures, and it is right that those implications be considered. However, I suggest that had those Members been in Marseille or Charleroi, seen the appalling scenes and felt the intense shame of being English, as I did on those occasions, they would have been persuaded to soften their view.

The Bill deals with a unique problem, and that is why its measures are justified. It attacks the perception of some young men that they have a right to go overseas, flout the laws of another country and cause general havoc, supposedly in the name of supporting England. That is a liberty that they have taken for far too long and it must be curtailed. Football violence is a complex problem. By its nature, it is difficult to identify and confront. Blunt instruments are needed to deal with it. The Bill gives the authorities the tools that they need to prevent the scenes that have marred previous summers and tournaments.

Hon. Members have suggested that the problems of supporting England abroad are caused by a few bad apples. Having seen the events at first hand, I do not accept that. England's away supporters traditionally attracted the worst elements of many football league clubs in this country. Until now, the whole culture of following England has been rotten—hostile, xenophobic and racist. It encourages and endorses unacceptable behaviour, disrespect for others and disregard for the laws of other countries. Although the measures will help to root out the bad apples, many others—most notably the Football Association—have a responsibility to continue to purge the culture prevailing in English football support abroad.

Before I come to my main point, I want to raise two specific issues that I would like the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth), to address in his winding-up speech. First, for the legislation to work, proper enforcement is crucial. For all the sense that the spotter system used by the National Criminal Intelligence Service at recent major tournaments makes in principle, it is not working on the ground. In Marseilles and Charleroi, it was blatantly obvious to many of us who the troublemakers were and in which bars the first glass or chair was likely to be thrown. However, the authorities did not seem to reach the same conclusion. Once trouble began, it got out of hand very quickly and was then impossible to contain. I urge the Government to look closely at the spotter system and to take steps to make it more effective.

Secondly, the success of the Bill depends in part on persuading other Governments to take action and to prosecute England football fans who are guilty of committing offences abroad. I understand the desire of countries on the receiving end of such appalling behaviour to deport the troublemakers at the first opportunity, but if they can be persuaded to prosecute and secure a conviction, it would help us to tackle the problem in the long term. That would give the British authorities immediate cause to impose banning orders, and would be a powerful deterrent to others.

Perhaps the Government could come to an agreement with the Governments of countries where England is due to play—starting with Japan and Korea—that troublemakers will be prosecuted. If necessary, the Government could consider making a contribution to the costs that would be incurred by Governments pursuing such convictions.

The Government are right to keep the Bill focused on the problems created by England followers abroad, but that brings me to my one substantive concern. I would not like the authorities in this country to use the powerful measures that the Bill will put at their disposal to crack down on football supporters in general. In discussing football violence, a clear distinction must always be drawn between the culture of following England abroad and that of following league clubs at home and away. They are very different. The latter provides great enjoyment to millions of law-abiding and decent men, women and children in this country. It is already heavily regulated—perhaps over-regulated—and there is no justification for any further steps to limit the few freedoms that football fans enjoy.

On countless occasions, I have witnessed fans being unfairly treated by police or stewards, or unfairly ejected from football grounds, but because they are football fans, that is apparently okay. It is as if they have no recourse to argument or reason, but can just be taken out of the ground and that is that. I urge the Government to consider those concerns carefully and to ensure that the interests of people who support football week in, week out in this country are not weakened or undermined by the passing of this legislation. Subject to that proviso, I welcome the Bill, coupled with the steps that the Football Association has taken to abolish the England Members Club. I hope that, in the long term, it will transform the culture of supporting England abroad.

It is possible to achieve this. At Goodison Park in the late 1980s, racist chanting and abuse were frequently heard and, I am sorry to say, tolerated by many. However, many true Evertonians did not accept it: they challenged it and slowly things began to get better. Now, I am proud to say that Everton football club has its first ever black club captain. That proves that it is possible to break the hold that a nasty element can have over following a club or country. The measures being adopted will help, but it will take all decent England supporters to stand up and be counted and reject the behaviour of those who bring shame on this country.

8.50 pm

**Mr. David Cameron** (Witney): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), who knows a lot about his subject. Not only is he a football fan, he is quite an accomplished cricket player, as I discovered during a game this summer.

Many of those who have spoken in the debate or have written about the subject are either lawyers or football fans, but I have to confess that I am neither: I am just a

novice parliamentarian who is trying to work out whether the draconian powers in the Bill are really necessary. I fear that my hon. Friend the Member for West Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) will decide that I am a member of the pussyfoot tendency when he hears what I have to say, but I believe that this is an important debate.

The debate is important, first, because we are dealing with what has been a desperate problem for this country—football hooliganism—and secondly, because we are discussing serious measures that will affect our freedoms. I accept that the background is one of overall success in football. As the hon. Member for Leigh said, there is less racism in football. Attendances are growing, accompanied by decreases in the number of offences, crimes and arrests. Football is one place where things are getting better.

Like many hon. Members, I have always been struck by an uneasy feeling when England travels abroad to play football, not just because I want the team to win so much and fear that they will not do so, but because I fear that when I switch on my television set I will see terrible news about hooliganism and dreadful behaviour. However, I also feel uneasy about the Bill.

I have no difficulty with the concept of banning orders or with the previous measure's provision combining international and domestic banning orders to stop people seeing football matches either at home or abroad. Neither do I have a problem with the idea of taking someone's passport away after a banning order has been looked at by the court. However, I have some difficulty with the concept of courts imposing bans on individuals who have no convictions, although I acknowledge the statement in the explanatory notes:

"The court must make the order if it is shown"—

I repeat "shown"—

"that the person has previously caused or contributed to violence or disorder in the UK or elsewhere and if it is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that a banning order would help prevent football related violence or disorder."

At least in that case the defendant has his day in court.

My real difficulty, which I am sure some hon. Members share, is with the police stopping individuals leaving the country because—well, just because. That is the big question. Perhaps the police just do not like the look of the individuals concerned. The explanatory notes state that the police can

"give a person a notice . . . not to leave England and Wales, and under certain circumstances to surrender his passport, if the police have reasonable grounds for suspecting he has previously caused or contributed to violence".

That is the difficult bit—the bit that leads one to ask what has happened to the concept of criminal proof in our criminal justice system, to our ability to travel freely, and to the crucial principle of innocent until proven guilty.

The hon. Member for Leigh says that we are dealing with a unique problem, but is it unique? In a way, every crime is unique, but we do not resort to measures such as those in the Bill. That is why we must think very carefully about them. I instinctively trust the police; none the less, it makes me nervous when we give them increased powers—especially powers of the nature of those in the Bill—because it increases the chance of abuse. If we give the police too many extra specific powers, a few bad apples could give the police service a bad name. We should always think and debate carefully before we give more and more specific powers to the police. We should ask them to use everything else first.

Are the police using all the possible intelligence to follow hooligans and to share information with other police forces? Are they doing everything to help the French, Dutch and Belgian police forces to arrest people in those countries instead of Parliament giving our police service more powers? Sometimes, even the police are nervous about being given extra specific powers. When I was a naive special adviser in the Home Office, I remember visiting the Police Federation. At that time the great concern was over identity cards and whether we should have them. A member of the federation said, "If we have identity cards, we would need to have a power of arrest in respect of those not carrying cards, and that would be bureaucratic." Naively, I asked, "What do you do now?" He replied, "We have the ways and means Act." I asked what it was, and he said, "I stand on someone's toe and he calls me an expletive deleted, and I arrest him for a breach of the peace." Sometimes the police are sceptical about new specific powers.

It must be said that there has been an enormous amount of legislation on football disorder. We have had the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol) Act 1985, the Public Order Act 1996 and the Football Spectators Act 1989. My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe read out some of the Acts—

**Mr. Grieve:** Beaconsfield.

**Mr. Cameron:** I am sorry. Beaconsfield and Wycombe are not far from each other, but geographically I was wrong.

We have had almost more football Acts than England victories abroad in certain years. There has been so much legislation and we should be nervous about passing so many Acts related to this one area of football. As my hon. Friend said, we want to see evidence that the Bill will be worth while.

It is clear that there is evidence to show that there has been overall improvement. About 100,000 British fans have transversed Europe since Euro 2000, yet there have been only 43 reported arrests. However, is there evidence to support the specific powers that are set out in the Bill? The report to Parliament on that issue is helpful, and I have read it carefully, but, I hope that I am not alone in finding it rather thin. Could we not find a little more detail?

Will the Minister be able to give us more detail about those who went to court and were not banned? How long did those cases take? Of the orders made by the police, how many did the courts eventually endorse? Which police forces have used the powers in the current Act? What did those forces find? What did they think of the powers set out in the Act? Could we have reports from magistrates or stipendiary magistrates who have dealt with the powers? Could we have reports from police authorities that have been using the current Act? Could such reports be placed in the Library so that we might see them?

I would be grateful if the Minister were to say whether we have dealt with the anomaly that the Act did not cover people travelling from Scottish ports or airports to England matches. The issue was raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Miss Widdecombe) when the Act was last debated.

*[Mr. Cameron]*

in general, if we take away liberties we should do so only on the basis of the most serious and compelling evidence. There are Opposition Members who will be looking to those on the Government Benches to say more about that. Why are we renewing the Act before we have to, given that it takes away liberties? As we are renewing it, should we not renew every year the key clauses that I have mentioned? I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for West Chelmsford on that point. We are dealing with important civil liberties. These are that people are innocent until proven guilty and the criminal standard of proof. I would like to see sunset clauses rather than the sun set permanently over some of the rights that we are considering.

To sum up, most of us will support the legislation at the end of the day. We will back it because we are appalled, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Chelmsford said most movingly, by the behaviour of a few thugs. In this country, on the whole, we trust the police and magistrates to behave reasonably and not abuse the powers that Parliament has given them. However, I hope that Members will forgive me for being a little nervous about taking away those liberties, even in those restricted categories. We are in desperate need of reassurance from the Minister. In a previous debate on the matter, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Mr. Lilley) said that there is no excuse for thuggish behaviour, but we should not respond to thuggish behaviour with thuggish laws. He made a good point; we need the reassurance of facts and figures before we take away people's rights in such important areas of civil liberty.

9.1 pm

**Dr. Ian Gibson** (Norwich, North): I am sure that the House will forgive me if I do not emulate the stories of Members who support the English national team. I do not have that problem as I support the Scottish national team; events and excitements there are few and far between these days. I also support Norwich City football club, where there have been very few problems over the years—although I remember Manchester United fans tearing down the asbestos cladding at the back of the Barclay stand, which could, I suppose, be regarded as a piece of social engineering. On the other hand, they did that out of frustration. Scottish fans have not always been innocent. We took a fancy to the grass at Wembley one year and I confess that I was there. Much of the turf was removed to the chagrin of Jimmy Hill and others, but I noticed that it was replaced with much better quality grass by the following weekend.

I had trouble finding instances of football disorder of which I had personal experience, so I turned to the usual source for understanding the problem—academic sociologists, who are part of a growth industry and have no trouble at all getting grants to undertake sociological studies of football hooliganism. I should like to take a little time to analyse some of the stuff that they have come out with. I might say that it does not add much to the debate, but it is interesting that they have done a lot of work.

I shall give Members the titles of one or two papers that I have had the excitement of reading over the summer. Eduardo Archetti wrote an article entitled "Playing Styles and Masculine Virtues in Argentine Football" in "Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery". Great reading. "The Postmodernity of Football Hooliganism" appeared in the *British Journal of Sociology*. Other articles are "Football Hooliganism and the Practical Paradigm" and "Soccer Crowd Disorder and the Press: Processes of Amplification and Deamplification in Historical Perspective". I am sure that every Northampton fan would certainly benefit from that. An old friend of mine who, I remember, was quite a good goalkeeper, has gone back to Scotland and written "The Cappielow Riot and the Composition and Behaviour of Soccer Crowds in Late Victorian Scotland"—essential reading for analysis of the Bill. "Faith, Hope and Bigotry: Case Studies of Anti-Catholic Prejudice in Scottish Soccer and Society" is another article; there are others, such as "Selling the Game Short". A mass of them have kept me busy for several nights.

There are various explanations for football hooliganism, and I shall go through them quickly. There are as many explanations as there are sociologists in British universities. One explanation is that hooliganism

"involves deriving comfort, performing a social obligation, achieving recreation, discovering . . . identity, passing the time, being with others".

People engage in it

"for an endless variety of other private personal reasons".

We need to know why people pursue their recreation, as it were, by going to a football match. Some argue that the state of modern living creates the problems; the modern consumer life style increasingly lacks a sense of danger or ordeal, and people want to get rid of boredom. An extension of that is the Marcuse argument, which is a reaction against the surplus state repression. Some Members will identify with that, having written essays on it in their youth. The culture of pursuing danger, risk taking and creativity can involve exciting activities. We can fall off mountains or go on holiday in war zones; we do not need to have a punch-up at a football match to create that kind of excitement.

I ask Members to bear with me for a few more minutes while I tell them about some more analyses. There is the gender-centred analysis involving aggressive, troubled, hegemonic or empowering masculinity. There is the neo-tribal hypothesis, with individuals promoting self-identity and self-definition. The structural Marxists have come in on it as well, with an attempt to reclaim the magical camaraderie and intimacy of a lost working class system of traditional communities. No doubt that is a favourite of many hon. Members present. The Leicester school says that hooligan participants are simply roughs. They are lower working class and just love violence. That is the result of a £200,000 sociological study.

The police, too, have promoted some interesting analyses in Home Office documents, with references to

"Mafia-like command systems running football violence in Britain",

with official statuses of generals, lieutenants, armourers and photographers who

"prey on innocent supporters motivated by outright wickedry."

Gary Armstrong's latest book "Football Hooligans" is a story of Sheffield United fans. Sheffield seems to figure prominently in analyses of football. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), who is a

great back four player, spoke earlier. As his manager, I do man-to-man marking analysis with him, and he is a wonderful man-to-man marker—no violence, but my goodness, does he prevent the opposition from moving about in the penalty area.

Gary Armstrong starts with the statement that the war against hooligans has a long way to go, whatever the definition of hooligans turns out to be. Reference has been made to the National Criminal Intelligence Service's report of 20 August this year. The report admits that violent football hooliganism continued to increase during last season. The incidents reported to the unit by football intelligence officers is significantly up on the same period last year. That seems to apply to all divisions, so the problem clearly exists.

Armstrong's analysis questions the emphasis placed by the police on patrolling football matches. He thinks that their time would be better spent catching petty thieves and on burglary-related issues. He goes on to state:

"There will still be disturbances at and around football matches. Commentators will continue to moralise and pontificate and drone on about what lessons can be learned from various events, and sociologists amongst others will attempt to give a rationale to what are frequently irrational events."

I can tell the House that sociological violence has broken out across the nation as each sociology department in every British university disagrees with all the others about their analyses.

I doubt whether we will get to the explanation, despite the money spent on sociological analyses, and I doubt whether that will help us to develop policy, but I can assure the House that much effort has been put into the endeavour, and many young students are no doubt bored to death after being subjected to such sociological guff.

Episodes will continue to happen and, as we say in Norfolk, there are wrong 'uns who will always be around, looking for a bit of trouble. The police have identified that in their document, where they state that in the close vicinity of stadiums they have been successful, but that the problem has been displaced. Other hon. Members have mentioned that tonight. It is recognised that the problem is moving from the football grounds.

What are we to do about it? Again, I refer to Sheffield politicians. There have been many debates in the House in which Sheffield politicians have participated. I shall not name the individuals; hon. Members can spot them. In 1989 in the debate on the Football Spectators Bill, a Sheffield Member of Parliament welcomed hooliganism as an outlet for violence, but at the same time said that hooligans must be eradicated. The mind boggles at the thought of how he proposed to do that. There was a certain inconsistency in the argument.

Other Sheffield Members called for a change in police attitudes to fans, and another hon. Member spoke of football's

"structure, greed and psyche, and its contempt for ordinary working class lads."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 28.]

That was the Front-Bench spokesperson—not tonight, but in another arena. I see that some hon. Members recognise who that might be.

The problem will continue and probably increase. The NCIS document states that

"there are some very encouraging signs. Banning Orders are having an impact and Human Rights challenges to Banning Orders have been recently rejected by the High Court; the Football Association have completely revamped their members' clubs to weed out troublemakers and the Belgian Presidency of the EU has called for each EU member state to establish a permanent national police information centre"

and so on. The police are encouraged by those developments.

On balance, I think that the Government are right to take the problem seriously and to try to ensure an effective deterrent. Whatever the origins of football hooliganism, the development of that deterrent will prevent and discourage people from going to games in order to engage in such activity. I am serious about that because I do not want to read football headlines that argue about who threw the stone first, who punched who and so on. I want to hear about Iwan Roberts scoring a hat trick for Norwich City. Indeed, I will even go along with applauding a David Beckham goal and reading an analysis of the trajectory of the ball as it went into the top corner. Even considering a physical analysis of how such a shot works would be better than reading headlines about violence. Anything that we can do to detract from the bad headlines that we have had over the years is welcome. I believe that the Bill goes a long way towards achieving that and that the public will respect us for introducing it. We must support it.

9.10 pm

**Mr. Tony Clarke** (Northampton, South): The debate has been somewhat truncated, so I shall try to curtail my speech and keep to the relevant rather than the repetitive, in the hope that other Back Benchers may still be able to contribute.

This debate gives us the opportunity to do two things. First, we must reaffirm our determination to combat and fight the football hooliganism that still exists. Secondly, we must review the question whether the 2000 Act, in its current context, has worked, is working and is making a difference. Within football, the figures show that 580 banning orders have been put in place. That has been done with the support and assistance of football supporters and of organisations such as the Football Supporters Association, which have given their unstinting and total support to the Government in trying to eradicate yobbery and thuggery from the game. They have even suggested that the measures did not go far enough in respect of the courts. They feel that, in many cases, courts could and should have done better in ensuring that banning orders were used to prevent known and convicted hooligans from travelling.

Many hon. Members have mentioned Charleroi. One of the most stunning and worrying aspects of the violence that occurred in Belgium was that 24 of the 965 people who were arrested were known football hooligans. They had previous convictions and should have been picked up by the banning orders and prevented from travelling, but they still slipped through the net. Irrespective of our best intentions and attempts to prevent all circumstances in which people with criminal convictions can travel to games, some of them will find ways of avoiding our measures. Such people have no respect for the law or the restrictions that we introduce and will try to circumvent any attempt that we make to stop their illegal action.

The vast majority of the 965 people who were arrested were released without charge and took no part whatever in any criminal activity and/or violence. Football fans,

*[Mr. Tony Clarke]*

the FSA and others who have given the Government their support are due some return. If we are asking football supporters and true followers of the game to work with us and be part of our attempt to rid the game of hooliganism, we must give them our support when things go badly wrong, as they did in Charleroi. If anything, we need a way not only of dealing with hooligans, but of ensuring a proper code of conduct for police forces throughout Europe in respect of football events. What happened in Charleroi was an abuse of police powers. People were detained in the most terrible conditions, although it has since been proven that they were innocent of any offence.

It is important for us to recognise that violence has been displaced over the years and has moved away from the event itself. It has departed from grounds and moved into areas that are unconnected with football. Irrespective of whether the Bill is permanent or will be reviewed, that displacement will be more important in future, when we consider how yobbish behaviour is affecting our national identity and shaming us as a nation. Violence and thuggery still exist.

I shall quote from the press report of a recent incident at an international fixture:

"A steward was removed from the field on a stretcher with two broken ribs and a damaged spleen. Officials said Stephen Speight was hit on the head and kicked while on the ground. He was to spend the night in hospital."

That report was of an international cricket fixture.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Dr. Gibson) wondered whether there was class distinction in the legislation. An earlier news report covered an Oxbridge ski tour at a resort in France. It described the participants as a mob of

"ignorant, arrogant middle class yobs",

who abused foreigners and soiled their bedrooms and chalets.

If we wish to descend further down the class structure, we can read another recent report of the behaviour of drunken yobs. It states:

"A bunch of drunken toffs caused mayhem in the Oxfordshire village of Kingston Blunt two weekends ago. The party was for Oxford University's Bullingdon Club, which involves its members, or 'Bullers', in a riotous drinking binge. One of them listed the alcohol they had knocked back; 'We started off with a Jeroboam' (about ten ordinary bottles' worth) 'of Perrier Jouet and got through eight bottles of Bolly a head.'

The marquee 'was covered in broken crockery, splintered tables and the bodies of "Buller" men wearing tweed suits'. Among the gang was Lord Lawson's son, Tom, who had graduated from the university. Around 30 police eventually arrived to deal with the party, and they let the rich kids off with a caution."

I mention that because yobbery, violence and thuggery exist in British society, and our nation is shamed by the acts of thugs, irrespective of whether they have a connection with football. When travelling abroad, I try to avoid Benidorm and Ibiza. However, I cannot be the only Member of Parliament who dreads not only the accommodation, but visiting the bar and the possible presence of 15 or 20 male British holidaymakers who seem dedicated to three pursuits: lubricating the larynx as often as possible; trying to charm the pants off any unfortunate member of the opposite sex who happens to be in the bar—television programmes suggest that most of them do not wear any—and picking a fight with anybody, especially anyone who has the audacity not to speak the Queen's English.

Examples of thuggery and violence can be witnessed in other events such as marches and demonstrations. In recent months, problems occurred in Geneva, and in the United Kingdom on May day. When we consider the identity of those involved and the infiltration of such events by, for example, right-wing organisations and thugs, we must accept that some people are hellbent on causing problems—not only at football games but at other events—that shame our nation and the House. Such problems occur on Friday and Saturday nights at many restaurants and pubs in every town and city in the land.

Violence and disorder are a moveable feast; they are played on different stages. I urge Ministers to develop a more robust and multi-faceted approach to tackling yob culture, and not simply to treat football in isolation. I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Hepburn) for mentioning Northampton Town. I declare an interest as a club director, but we are rightly proud of the measures that we have taken to eradicate hooliganism, yobbery and racism and to ensure that football is an event to which people can bring families and enjoy themselves in peaceful surroundings without the threat of violence. We get fed up when people refer to hooligans as football fans. They are not fans; they never have been. They use football as a vehicle for thuggery and violence.

In Committee, we must seriously consider the role of the media. We cannot support the fact that, before any violence and thuggery had occurred, every television camera at Charleroi was prepared to project such images around the world, thereby shaming Britain. It was almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. We expected trouble and the cameras were there, so we almost invited the thugs who wanted to unleash their criminal activity on us to do so.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Minister that I dissent from the Bill only in its title. Perhaps the word "football" should be omitted. Perhaps the House ought to discuss a disorder Bill that would prevent thugs from practising their yobbery wherever they wish to do so. Perhaps we should consider how to prevent people with criminal convictions from travelling to holiday destinations year on year to involve themselves in violence, shaming this nation.

I hope that Ministers listen to the voices, even those on the Opposition Benches, that say that we must not stigmatise football and that we must not focus narrowly by considering only the longevity of a measure. We must look more widely at where violence can present itself and how it can be combated.

9.21 pm

**Mr. John Grogan** (Selby): I have the misfortune to follow four powerful and well-informed speeches. Although the hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Cameron) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) spoke from opposite sides of the House, they drew on their experience as special advisers, which is a brave boast to make tonight. We heard of the scholarship of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Dr. Gibson), who I shall never consider in the same light again having heard of his holiday reading.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Clarke) drew on his experience as a football director and he was right to point out that violent behaviour is a problem for society as well as for football. The behaviour that we saw on the streets of Charleroi is repeated in many holiday destinations year on year and we need to examine our attitude to drink and the drinking culture. The licensing laws are relevant here. When English people go abroad, they suddenly find that they can drink through the night and they behave badly in many, many contexts. Football is a specific problem, however.

Largely through the work and campaigning of the hon. Member for West Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), we know what the typical football hooligan looks like. I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh, as the typical football hooligan is not necessarily a young man. The average age of those who have suffered a banning order is 31 and of the 1,000 British people expelled during Euro 2000, only 50 were on benefits. The average football hooligan is not particularly young, as he is approaching middle age, and not particularly poor, as he is probably in a well-paid job.

I have never supported England abroad and my club is Bradford City, so I have had precious little opportunity to follow it overseas. However, I went to a game during the last World cup—Jamaica against Croatia, which was a happy occasion. Jamaican families were present, as were Croatian youths who had crossed the continent to western Europe, perhaps for the first time, to support their team. Just along the way from me were three English fans, who were drunk. They completely dominated the atmosphere. Every time Croatia got the ball, they stood up and chanted in unison, "You're all a load of collaborators!" Presumably, that was a reference to the war, and they added expletives as well.

The identity of English football fans abroad is based on attacking the IRA or looking back to the war. That has to change; it is absurd. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh correctly pointed out, not only a mindless minority are involved. Sadly, that xenophobic attitude is shared by a significant proportion of those who support England abroad, which is why the Government had to take strong action last year.

The way in which we are considered by the rest of Europe has changed because of that legislation. A year ago, other European Governments were saying, "Why didn't you introduce strong measures to deal with this?" As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North pointed out, other European Governments are now considering copying our legislation. Indeed, there is a good sign that Belgium, which is soon to accede to the presidency of the European Union, has made dealing with football hooliganism throughout Europe one of its priorities. It held a seminar in May and proposes the creation of a system of national contact points on football and the establishment of common rules on the prevention of hooliganism.

Thus at a time when other European countries are looking at the lead that we have taken it is entirely appropriate that we make this legislation permanent. So far, it has worked well. Where those subject to banning orders have needed to travel abroad there have been 30 instances in which, for work or family reasons, they have appealed and have quite properly been allowed to travel. This legislation is not draconian; it is measured and considered.

Some hon. Members have talked of the importance of other nations prosecuting football hooligans abroad so that we have a firm basis on which to impose banning orders here at home. Over the summer, the *Daily Express* carried an exclusive under the byline Tony Banks—I presume that he is no relation—which quoted the director of security in Japan for World cup 2002 as saying:

"You cannot be certain, but it is highly likely that anyone caught here"—

for football hooliganism—

"will be put in jail.

If they are convicted of a violent crime I would have thought a three or five-year sentence would not be too long.

If we see the sort of things we saw in France 98, with that level of crime, people will go to jail. Charleroi at Euro 2000 was a disaster."

Our football fans are warned.

I also note that the Koreans will ban noodles, cigarettes and balloons from stadiums in a bid to reduce litter at the new grounds. Fans will be given small plastic bags to take into the stadiums to encourage them to take their own rubbish away. I think that there will be one or two cultural differences.

I commend the taskforce report on hooliganism produced by Lord Bassam. Let me draw attention to two of its findings, the first of which is the extremely important work of fans' embassies abroad. Lord Bassam urges the Government to continue to support those embassies, which are run by fans and which try to encourage football fans to participate in the culture of a big tournament such as the World cup. The second idea is that of sending stewards from English clubs with English fans abroad. The next European championship will take place in Portugal in 2004. There might be a shortage of English stewards who speak Portuguese, but they have two or three years in which to learn it. Such initiatives are well worth considering.

The FA, under the leadership of Adam Crozier, is to be commended. It is trying to widen England's fan base, which certainly needs widening. England needs far more women and children to support it abroad. It is also a good thing that the FA has insisted that crucial matches of our national game are shown live on terrestrial television. If England matches are not to become a marginal interest, they must be shown to all fans on terrestrial television. The whole House hopes that the law enacted by the British Parliament is respected and that a deal is finally done for the transmission of the World cup.

I commend the Bill to the House, but much more must be done to encourage, both at home and abroad, the sort of policing that we saw in the Netherlands during the European championships. Lord Bassam referred to such policing as friendly but firm hospitality, or an integrated approach. I hope that we shall soon reach the day when, if we can keep this sort of legislation in place, we can all be truly proud of our national team and its achievements.

9.28 pm

**Mr. Adrian Bailey** (West Bromwich, West): Given the shortage of time, I shall make my comments brief.

I welcome the Bill. I joined others in the jubilation at England's qualifying for the World cup finals in Japan and Korea, but that jubilation was tinged with trepidation at the behaviour that we might see from our fans, based

*[Mr. Adrian Bailey]*

on the evidence of previous international tournaments. I believe that the Bill will go some way to removing that trepidation.

Even more important than what happens at next year's World cup is the experience that we shall gain from implementing the Bill—from the games that have taken place so far, the Japan and South Korea international tournament and the European championships in 2004, when we might be far more vulnerable to the thuggery that we saw in France in 1998 and in Belgium and Holland in 2000.

Arguments have been advanced about civil liberties. Yes, there is a civil liberties argument, but the hon. Member for West Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) made the point succinctly that the civil liberties of people who want to wreck a stadium and its surrounds during a tournament should be balanced against those of fans who want to go to a match because they enjoy football and want to cheer on their national team. If I had to choose between those two groups of people, I have no doubt what my choice, and that of all hon. Members, would be.

It is not just a question of balance. The Government have had to introduce draconian legislation, because if they had not done so the prospect of further violence at matches would have led to our being banned from future international tournaments. There was a double whammy. Without this legislation and with violence continuing, more and more thugs would have been attracted to tournaments and the propensity for them to degenerate into violence would have been even greater. Conversely, the incentive for law-abiding, decent, genuine fans to go to matches would have been removed. Without these measures, there was the prospect of behaviour deteriorating further in subsequent tournaments.

The measures taken to disband the England supporters club and the introduction of the Englandfans travel club are important in upholding the rights of genuine England supporters. The impression has been given that some genuine supporters may be prevented from going to matches. Under the revised arrangements, such people can attend through the Englandfans travel club. If the legislation is to stay in place, as it obviously is, it is important for the recommendations of the working group on football violence, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Grogan) referred, to be implemented so that we have an effective ticket sales regulatory regime that protects the interests of ordinary fans. In the debate on civil liberties I have not heard a positive solution to this problem that would uphold civil liberties at the level advocated by some Opposition Members.

The only reason for not introducing this measure would be that the legislation had not proved effective. It was sensible to have the sunset clause to enable us to see how the legislation would work in practice. We have had a big debate about the so-called big one—the Germany *v.* England game—but England have played other matches abroad, including the friendly in France and matches against Albania and Greece. The Wales *v.* Ukraine match was also covered by this legislation. In all those games, a significant number of banning orders were made, and there was a substantial reduction in the violence that had occurred during previous tournaments.

**Mr. Grieve:** Is that not precisely the point that I made earlier? There is a body of information about what has happened at previous matches, but no one has extrapolated the evidence of how banning orders worked in practice, and in particular how section 21 orders were implemented and what their effects were on the people on whom they were served. Is that not an unfortunate state of affairs when we are considering the Bill?

**Mr. Bailey:** There has been time for the implications of the actions taken in the games prior to the England *v.* Germany match to be considered. The evidence on the surface shows that the orders have been effective. The number of violent incidents at those games was much reduced, which I think substantiates the case for making the legislation permanent.

There has been much talk of the England *v.* Germany match and its implications. I, too, attended "the big one": 100,000 people were there, passionate supporters of both England and Germany. They cheered the goals, they congregated peacefully, and they left the ground peacefully. I am not talking about a fantasy game; I am talking about the real "big one" between England and Germany.

In 1966, when England won the World cup, I was fortunate enough to be present. Those were the halcyon days when those who attended football matches just wanted to watch football. Now, of course, we have seen the infiltration of club fans by thugs and antisocial elements. There has been an enormous improvement in club ground security, as others have said; but there has been a significant change in the nature of soccer violence over the last five or six years. Because of the improved surveillance and improved marshalling at club grounds, violence has moved away from the ground—from the match—to the surrounding areas. The event, rather than the match itself, has begun to attract violence and thuggery.

On the international scene, it can be no coincidence that we now see the phenomenon of thousands of fans travelling abroad without tickets, not to attend the match but just to attend the event. All the evidence we have so far is that a substantial proportion of those people have criminal records and, certainly, an antisocial intent. That underlines the need for the Bill.

To my knowledge, the hosts of the next World cup, Japan and South Korea, have no tradition of managing football violence. That places an enormous responsibility on the Government both to do all in their power to prevent those who will commit acts of violence from going out, and to work with those countries, giving them the benefit of the intelligence and management expertise we have developed so far to ensure that they too can curb such violence.

I also agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Selby that we should work with other countries to show them how our legislation operates, in the hope that they too will start to introduce legislation to prevent their own hooligans from attending international matches. The problem of hooliganism is not unique to this country. It may have been started by fans, or so-called fans, from this country, but it has spread to others. I hope the Minister will bear that in mind.

As others have said, the sort of violence that we are seeing now at international football events is, in many ways, a reflection of the society around us. Ultimately, what we must do is change society. In the meantime,

however, we must take care to protect our reputation abroad in the forthcoming tournament, and I believe the Bill will do that.

We want to remember the next World cup as a feast of football, not a frenzy of fanatics.

9.39 pm

**Mr. James Paice** (South-East Cambridgeshire): The Minister rightly reminded us of the serious issues facing the House, and of the international situation. He also rightly said that life must go on, and that we must deal with other issues in this place. To do anything else would, in one sense, hand a reward to those who set out to disrupt our way of life. I must repeat, however, the challenge made by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Grieve) about why we had to deal with this matter today. Given certain recent events, including the farce over Wembley, the loss of the athletics championships and the blunderings of the Minister for Sport, there is a certain brazenness about the Government's doing anything that might improve this country's sporting attractiveness. More importantly, we already have legislation on the statute book that will remain there until next August.

It is unfortunate that the Minister could not provide us with the breakdown of the figures that my hon. Friend requested. Perhaps the Minister who will wind up the debate will be able to help. It is all very well to say that we will have the information in Committee, but that is too late, because a Second Reading debate is about the principle of a Bill, and today we have to decide whether we want to make permanent the current temporary provisions; the figures would have been valuable in making that decision.

Our view, in summary, is so far, so good: the legislation appears to be working and there is evidence that it might be reducing problems abroad. The human rights issues appear to have been resolved. The Opposition have no problem with the banning orders for those with convictions, but we have concerns about section 21 orders, as my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Cameron) rightly said.

We need to know a lot more about the Munich game and the events that took place during the control period. Why were nine of the applications for the orders unsuccessful? The hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) rightly said that it is worrying that, despite the fact that 22 cases were adjourned, and were therefore not proven at the time, the people concerned were nevertheless not allowed to travel. We should be told a lot more about the reasons for that.

Is there any evidence that any of those involved in the nine applications that were not successful caused any of the few problems that arose in Munich? We need to see reports from the magistrates involved in handling section 21 cases about how the law is working in practice, including how long hearings take and how much they cost. Have there been any actions against the police, as the Law Society clearly feared when it presented its evidence on the original proposals?

We need to know about the costs involved. What are the costs to the police authorities in the six terminals listed in the report? Is there any extra help available for the forces concerned, given that the potential troublemakers come not only from their areas but from all over the country? The issue of the loophole of travelling through Scotland or Northern Ireland has been mentioned. Is there any evidence that those who have been arrested for causing trouble abroad have exploited that loophole?

The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Hepburn) referred to the measure's popularity among his constituents. I am sure that the same would apply in every single constituency, but it is in the nature of things that people are usually quite happy to restrict other people's liberties and begin to complain only when their own are restricted. The role of Parliament is to be more objective and to consider whether any infringement of liberty is justified.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), who rightly reminded us that he first introduced such a Bill and that the Government belatedly adopted it, told us that it was time to stop pussyfooting around, and I entirely agree. He also reminded us that we must look after the rights and civil liberties of the majority, and I totally agree, but we should not do so at the cost of the civil liberties of the minority.

The debate is not about the England football team, the result of the World cup or the violence caused by so-called football fans abroad. To use an analogy, several hon. Members have run around the park, but they have not put the ball in the net; they have not got to the real issue. This is not a matter of the horrendous incidents that drag the name of English football and of England itself into the gutter. No one wants that to happen. All hon. Members would agree with the condemnation of such incidents that we have heard from so many Members, admirably starting with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts).

Xenophobia, racism and all the other matters to which hon. Members rightly referred have no place in our society, full stop, and certainly not under any pretext of supporting a football team or, as the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Clarke) said, any other form of social or sporting activity. We all condemn the mindless thugs, the hooligans and the racists who drag our country down. To continue with the comment about pussyfooting around made by my hon. Friend the Member for West Chelmsford, some of us would argue that no penalty could be too tough for those who are convicted of such offences. However, the qualifying phrase, "those who are convicted" is important.

The issue, therefore, is not whether something needs to be done to combat football hooliganism, but whether this is the right Bill, whether now is the right time to introduce it and whether the evidence is as yet to hand to show that the infringement of individuals' civil liberties that the Bill will inevitably involve is justified by the reduction in violence and disorder caused by so-called football fans abroad. As I said in my opening comments, the Opposition accept that the evidence is beginning to show that that is the case, but it is by no means clear cut.

Only one match has been played since the order was renewed in July, yet the Government are still taking action now. The figures on the number of cases, to which several hon. Members referred, are hardly conclusive on their own. The Government should not have introduced the Bill until next summer, when we will have the experience of the World cup behind us. It is highly probable that we will then have absolutely clear cut, irrefutable evidence on whether the Bill is justified, and we will be able to act with a clear conscience, because the case has not yet been proven.

*[Mr. James Paice]*

We would have preferred to allow more time to gather the evidence. We could then have voted in favour of the Bill with a clear conscience in the knowledge that we were helping to achieve the objectives that we all share. The Bill is premature, but because the evidence is beginning to show that it might be right at some stage, we shall not oppose it in the Lobby tonight, although we wish that the Government had taken more time to garner the evidence.

9.48 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Bob Ainsworth):** We have had an excellent debate. It is often the case in the Chamber that some of the lower-key debates are the best. The apparent expertise about football and the issues involved has produced an enjoyable, informative debate. In the time remaining, it will be difficult to refer to all the issues and all the Members who have participated, although I shall do my best.

The House and the other place have wrestled with the problem of football hooliganism on several occasions. The laws that have been passed have made an important contribution to tackling domestic football disorder, but the international aspects of the problem have proved a very tough nut to crack. That is why the Football (Disorder) Act 2000 included some radical measures. Those measures were controversial, which is why they were time limited and subject to review.

All the available evidence suggests that sections 14B, 21A and 21B of the 2000 Act have had a major impact on fans' behaviour and have gone some way to repairing the damage that football hooliganism has inflicted on our national sport and on our national reputation. The measures have been subject to legal scrutiny and to the scrutiny of a high-risk match. They have not been found wanting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) described the problems. In graphic detail, he referred to the fear and disruption that have been caused by hooliganism. He has a long history not only as a football fan but as a supporter of civil liberties, and he told us that we had to keep the issues in balance. I agree, and the proposals do exactly that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Hepburn) made, on behalf of his constituents, an appeal for common sense. He reminded us of the scale of the problem and asked whether we could encourage other countries to introduce measures similar to ours. Other Members pointed out that other countries are considering similar legislation. The Belgian presidency is encouraging other European Union countries to introduce similar measures and it has been supportive of the legislation that the Government have introduced to try to tackle the problem of football hooliganism and, in particular, football hooliganism abroad.

The hon. Member for West Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) gave us his version of a history lesson and tried to make sure that none of us would forget his role in the earlier measure that he introduced. He wanted the monument to his political career made permanent. I do not know whether it will be his only monument—I am sure that he will go on to far greater things. He should, however, talk to his hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench who appear to have doubts about the proposals in the Bill. They, not the Government, need persuading.

One of the most surprising things in the debate was the fact that the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Grieve) got the hon. Member for West Chelmsford mixed up with the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes). I can creep to those involved by saying that it was an astonishing mix-up. I do not think that any two Members differ so much in their views, so I was surprised that such confusion took place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe and other Members referred to the role that racism plays in football disorder. He asked us to try to ensure that effective measures would be taken in that regard and that we would not merely pay lip service to the problem. He has considerable expertise in this issue, so he will know that the working group chaired by Lord Bassam published a report in March. One of its key recommendations was that all stewards should be reminded of their responsibilities to act against racist remarks. The football authorities have given a commitment to implementing that recommendation and the Government are committed to monitoring progress on that important issue. We shall keep an eye on it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) spoke of the shame that was brought on our nation by a small minority and said that he was concerned that we should not introduce general restrictions that would affect all football fans. Only well structured, intelligence-led measures, such as this Bill, that target the real hooligans who are at the core of the problem will avoid the measures that he is so worried about and prevent the damage to our national sport that took place so often in the past.

The hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Cameron) was worried that the legislation was draconian. It is my view and that of the overwhelming majority of hon. Members who have spoken tonight that it is proportionate to the problem. That is why the courts have found in its favour and supported it, and why they believe that it complies with the requirements of the European convention on human rights.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Scottish anomaly still exists. It does, but it should affect only a relatively small number of people. If the measures continue to have effect, it should be possible in the overwhelming majority of cases for bans under section 14B of the Football Spectators Act 1989 to be imposed on football hooligans before they leave England and Wales. Only a relatively small number of people will give us a problem by exiting via Scottish ports.

**Mr. Cameron:** I am grateful for the Minister's response. However, should we renew every year the specific power of the police to stop people travelling abroad? It seems to me that we should, because civil rights are being affected. A police officer needs to have only a suspicion in order to have reasonable grounds for preventing someone with no previous convictions from travelling abroad, which has a serious effect on our civil rights.

**Mr. Ainsworth:** I was coming to that. The record shows that my hon. Friend the Minister for Police, Courts and Drugs has tried to give the House the maximum

amount of information. The need for more information before we agree to the legislation was the thrust of the main attack by the Conservative Front Bencher. It was also a concern of the Liberal Democrat Front Bencher. My hon. Friend has given the House two reports and a commitment to try to share any information that he can before and during Committee proceedings. I only hope that hon. Members will judge whether the legislation is justified and necessary based on the information that is put before the House. Some of the information requested will not be available, but I hope that they accept that my hon. Friend is genuine in his desire to ensure Members that he will make information available so that the House can make a proper decision.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Dr. Gibson) made a phenomenal intervention. He did violence to sociological studies and to Sheffield Members of Parliament as a breed, but he decided on balance not to do violence to the Government or the legislation. He believes that the proposal is justified and intends to support it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Clarke) objected to the slur that is placed on football and its supporters. He said that it was unfair because the same problem exists in many other parts of society. He knows that the Government are trying to implement measures to tackle yobbery in general. My hon. Friends the Members for Selby (Mr. Grogan) and for West Bromwich, West (Mr. Bailey) rightly reminded us of the serious depths to which we have fallen. They appealed to us to accept that the Bill is necessary and proportionate to the problem.

The main objection of the hon. Member for Southwark, North and Bermondsey was that he would not accept the measure unless there is a conviction. That is not acceptable. I hope that the House will support the Bill.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 63 (Committal of Bills).*

## FOOTBALL (DISORDER) (AMENDMENT) BILL [*MONEY*]

*Queen's recommendation having been signified—*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 52(1)(a) (Money resolutions and ways and means resolutions in connection with bills),*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money provided under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Ainger.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [28 June],*

That Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 26th October, 2nd, 23rd and 30th November 2001, 11th, 18th and 25th January, 15th March, 12th and 19th April, 10th May, 21st June and 19th July 2002.—*[Mr. Ainger.]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

# Mrs. Jean Brett

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ainger.]*

10 pm

**Mr. Richard Page** (South-West Hertfordshire): This is a tale of error, denial and bureaucracy, but it is also a tale of courage and determination. It is the story of how Mrs. Jean Brett went against the national health service in a battle that started with her operation in March 1988. Ninety-nine out of 100 people would have given up by now and just walked away, but Mrs. Jean Brett is one in 100, as those who have seen her battling to keep Harefield heart hospital in existence will testify.

I look the Minister straight in the eye and say that to do full justice to this painful saga would take hours, but I have only 15 short minutes to present the case. Many years ago, I promised that when I saw the whole story coming to a conclusion I would raise it on the Floor of the House, because I wanted to ensure that it would never happen again. What I have to describe is disgraceful and shows bureaucracy and Government Departments at their worst.

To begin, I can do no better than quote from the opening paragraphs of a full-page article in *The Observer* of 22 April by a reporter called Yvonne Roberts. She starts:

"Jean Brett was a buoyant, confident woman with a career in teaching when she was diagnosed with glaucoma by her ophthalmologist in 1985. Stunned, she was told it was an incurable condition leading to weakening or a complete loss of sight.

Mrs Brett was prescribed eye drops which, she says, caused such a severe and persistent reaction that she was forced to take early retirement three years later at the age of 52. She subsequently underwent an operation on her right eye at Watford General Hospital, performed by her consultant.

The eye haemorrhaged. It now has a pronounced droop and continues to cause pain. 'I had become a shadow of my former self,'"

she recalled.

The article continues:

"In 1992, she was told an operation would also be required on her left eye. Mrs Brett insisted"—

very wisely—

"upon a second opinion. At Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, she learnt that not only was the operation unnecessary, she had never had glaucoma.

'I didn't know whether to hug the consultants or scream,' she said. 'I'd given up a job I loved and lived for years with pain only to learn I had done so for no good reason.'

Mrs Brett attended a follow-up appointment at Watford General Hospital. What she sought, she says, was an explanation. 'I had been diagnosed and treated for seven years for something I'd never had. I also wanted an apology and a way of establishing whether anybody else might also have been similarly misdiagnosed.'

But nine years later, after spending £30,000 of her own money in legal fees and in spite of the intervention of the Ombudsman, two MPs, one Minister, Hillingdon Community Health Council and an independent conciliator, her case is unresolved."

Such a brief outline does not cover the patently inexcusable delays. In November 1992, when Mrs. Brett asked for an apology and an explanation, she was told by a hospital manager to make a formal NHS complaint, which would be answered in about two months. She was told that solicitors should not be used, as compensation in the NHS could be arranged.

I see my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Randall), who has been very supportive throughout the campaign, in his place. He knows Mrs. Brett and her campaign to try to keep open our heart hospital at Harefield very well.

Seven months after the hospital manager's message, Mrs. Brett was told that Watford hospital had engaged solicitors and that she should do the same. The hospital did not, however, tell her of the options of community health councils, the ombudsman or clinical review procedures. She was told only of the most expensive option: solicitors. Two years passed, after which, as the article in *The Observer* stated, Mrs. Brett was not only tired out but £30,000 lighter. On the face of it, Watford hospital had won, but it had made a slight miscalculation: it had not reckoned with Mrs. Brett.

In 1996, Mrs. Brett asked that the NHS complaint be answered, and an independent review panel was convened under a new procedure. At that point—surprise, surprise—the most important half of Moorfields eye hospital records went missing. In December 1996, despite the fact that two independent consultants who had examined Mrs. Brett said that she had no sign of glaucoma—I am no expert, but I am given to understand that it is an irreversible eye disease—the panel did not admit that she had been misdiagnosed. We should bear in mind the fact that she had had one unnecessary operation and that the consultant wanted her to undergo the procedure for a second time.

Enter the ombudsman, to whom the review panel replied ambiguously that it was

"unable to conclude that there was any misdiagnosis".

So the two independent specialists and Moorfields were wrong, but Watford hospital was right. Eventually, on 23 December 1997, the chief executive of Watford hospital admitted to Mrs. Brett that there had been a misdiagnosis, but the promised formal apology failed to appear.

Following my correspondence in February 1998 with the Secretary of State for Health, of which the Minister will be aware, a recommendation for conciliation emerged. That state of limbo continued until Hillingdon CHC entered the scene—one of those councils that the Government want to abolish. It stepped in to recommend an independent conciliator, Roxanne Glick. The Glick report appeared in May 1999.

The article in *The Observer* continued:

"Roxanne Glick, the conciliator appointed by what is now, after several mergers, the West Herts Hospital Trust, published her investigation into the Brett case in 1999. She described the Trust's politicking and prevarication as 'astounding' and 'wholly unprofessional'. Two years on, none of her recommendations have been properly implemented.

Glick said last week: 'Mrs. Brett is entitled to a large amount of money but won't receive it. The Trust gave me access on what had become a very complicated case. It knew exactly what to expect from my final report. Mrs. Brett has been wrongly diagnosed. She was forced to go down a route which has caused her and her family a huge amount of stress. Sadly, her case is not an isolated one.'"

Detailing the way in which Watford hospital then handled the matter is not possible, given time constraints. Suffice it to say that a £3,500 unilateral ex gratia offer was made on a "take it or leave it" basis, with no prior discussion or debate. The Minister knows the basis on which ex gratia payments are offered and may be taken up. The answer to the offer was a decided no.

In April 2001 *The Observer* article appeared. On 25 April I asked the Secretary of State for Health whether he would reconsider the hands-off policy on ministerial intervention. At the same time, I asked for an assurance that the Glick report had been studied. On 7 June 2001, I received a response signed by Lord Hunt that made it clear that the Glick report had not been studied. In addition, the letter contained the extraordinary statement that Mrs. Brett's treatment had been appropriate and that further ministerial intervention would be inappropriate. I cannot regard that reply as a serious one. Not least because there had been no ministerial intervention up to that date, the reply shows the dangers of Ministers signing letters put in front of them by officials when they have not studied the background material. In addition, those who have any connection with the Maxwell case know that I simply do not give up that easily.

The time has surely been reached to bring an end to a sad and sorry story. The inaccuracies of the replies and actions over the years are too numerous to mention in the time available to me. I can only speculate about and shudder at the amount of management time and money that the national health service must have been wasted during this period—money that could have been put into patient care. Why should my constituent—why should anyone—have to go through such an ordeal to get an answer and fair play?

Why has the Glick report recommendation that the past glaucoma cases of the responsible consultant should be examined to establish the soundness of the diagnoses not been implemented? I ask the Minister to investigate why, despite my representations, the nightmare has been allowed to continue unchecked for so long, and to ensure that similar cases can be prevented in future. I ask that an independent assessor be appointed to determine what recompense might be paid to my constituent. The ball is now firmly in the Minister's court.

10.12 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. John Hutton):** I am grateful to the hon. Member for South-West Hertfordshire (Mr. Page) for raising his constituent's case tonight. He has done his constituent a signal service. Like all right hon. and hon. Members, I was sorry to hear about the health problems that Mrs. Brett has experienced and that her subsequent complaints to Watford general hospital were not dealt with to her satisfaction. The hon. Gentleman has asked me to respond to several specific concerns about Mrs. Brett's case, and I shall deal with each in turn shortly.

It is important that we bear in mind the fact that the national health service treats tens of thousands of patients every day. Last year, it treated more than 12 million patients in England, 43 million patients attended out-patient clinics and more than 14 million attended accident and emergency departments. Mount Vernon and Watford hospitals NHS trust treated more than 46,500 in-patients, 189,000 people were seen as out-patients and more than 63,000 attended accident and emergency.

As I am sure the hon. Gentleman acknowledges, medicine is, sadly, not always an exact science, so when things go wrong it is important that there is a simple, clear and transparent system for dealing with complaints and concerns which enables them to be dealt with quickly and effectively. Clearly, that did not happen in Mrs. Brett's case. We accept that although the complaints procedure works effectively for many patients, some, like Mrs. Brett, have had less positive experiences of the NHS's handling of complaints.

The complaints system was introduced in 1996. The objectives were to make it easier, simpler and quicker to complain and to be fairer to patients and staff, so that concerns were resolved as thoroughly and as openly as possible. The commitment was made by the previous Administration, who introduced the complaints procedure about which the hon. Gentleman has been complaining.

A commitment was given to evaluate the complaints procedure once it had had time to bed down to ascertain whether it was meeting its policy objectives. In 1999, therefore, the Department of Health commissioned an independent two-year UK-wide evaluation project to examine the complaints procedure.

The evaluation report, which was published last month, confirms that there is obviously room for improvement. It highlighted four key messages from patients who had experience of the complaints procedure: that complaints are often not handled well and take too long to resolve—I am sure that that is the opinion of the hon. Gentleman's constituent, Mrs. Brett; that communication between staff and patients and complainants is often poor; that the process is not always sufficiently independent and is perceived to be biased; and that there is no real system to learn from experiences and to make the necessary improvements in other places.

The report went on to make 27 suggestions about how the complaints procedure and arrangements for managing it could be improved. The hon. Gentleman will be glad to know that I shall not go through all 27 suggestions, as will everyone else who is listening. However, its recommendations fell into four broad categories. First, it identified the need to change the way in which the NHS deals with complaints. For example, there is a need to ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and support so that they can deal with patients' concerns more effectively as and when they arise.

Secondly, to ensure consistency across the NHS, there is a need to standardise procedures throughout the service and throughout the country, no matter what part of the NHS it is. Thirdly, increased independence of the procedure would ensure that the independent review is genuinely independent and perceived to be so by patients and staff. Fourthly, there is the need to strengthen monitoring and accountability within the procedures to give more responsibility to trust boards for monitoring the quality of complaints handling within their organisation and considering the role for other outside organisations.

We certainly need to find ways to ensure that complaints about services that cut across health and social care—although this was not such a case—can be dealt with as smoothly as possible, given that there are currently two separate stand-alone procedures. With joint provision of cases across health and social care increasing, and especially with the advent of the new care trusts, we are examining how the two complaints processes can be harmonised.

Alongside the evaluation report that was published on 3 September, we invited views from NHS staff, members of the public and patient representative groups about four key issues. We asked for views on the 27 suggestions

*[Mr. John Hutton]*

made in the report, and in relation to a series of key questions. First, what impact would a reformed procedure have on people and organisations? Secondly, how should performance in handling complaints be monitored and managed? Thirdly, what limits should there be for making and dealing with complaints? Finally, how can the current procedure be reformed to make it genuinely independent?

Our objective is to implement the necessary reforms next year. It is not just about improving complaints procedures for individuals. At the same time, we need to ensure that patients and the public have a better opportunity to be involved at a strategic decision-making level as well. That is why we intend, subject to legislation and the agreement of the House and the other place, to replace community health councils with patients' forums for every NHS trust and primary care trust, with a new national body to set standards and ensure consistency, and with local participation agencies, to be known as local voices, to enable citizen involvement in wider health issues.

In addition, the Department of Health has already agreed to implement all the recommendations made in the "Organisation with a Memory" report. A new independent body, the National Patient Safety Agency, will run a new national reporting system to record adverse events and near misses in health care. That will ensure that lessons learned in one part of the NHS are properly shared with the whole of the NHS.

In addition, the new National Clinical Assessment Authority will provide a fast response to concerns about doctors' performance and will provide a central point of contact for the NHS where concerns about a doctor's performance arise.

Another obvious challenge—the hon. Gentleman was right to draw attention to this—is to improve overall quality in the NHS, and thereby reduce the number of complaints, by developing and improving external inspection of services throughout the NHS.

Clinical governance provides NHS organisation and health care professionals with a new framework for quality improvement which, over time will, I hope, develop into a single coherent local programme for assuring and improving the quality of clinical services. Additionally, one function of the Commission for Health Improvement is to help the NHS to identify and tackle serious or persistent clinical problems. Information about complaints handling is considered by the commission in the context of its clinical governance reviews of individual NHS organisations. We need to ensure that the system for dealing with and monitoring the management of complaints develops in harmony with all those wider developments so that complaints are dealt with as effectively as possible and individual organisations and the NHS as a whole can learn from mistakes.

As the hon. Gentleman can see, all those things demonstrate the ways in which we are committed to learning from mistakes and to introducing a truly patient-centred NHS, which is the cornerstone of the NHS plan. While we can never guarantee that experiences such as that of Mrs. Brett will never happen again, our aim is to introduce a new system which will be as robust and responsive as possible in future.

I want to deal with the specific issues relating to Mrs. Brett which the hon. Gentleman brought to the attention of the House. He set out in detail the background to her long-standing complaint. He asked in particular that the trust implements the recommendations in the Glick report by apologising to Mrs. Brett, paying her compensation for injury and upset and conducting a proper review of its ophthalmology department. Finally, he urged Ministers to intervene in the case and ask an independent assessor to consider a further round of conciliatory discussions. My advice is that, following the trust board consideration of the Glick report, Mr. Eames, then chief executive of the trust, wrote to Mrs. Brett on 19 July 1999 making a full and unconditional apology; establishing that an audit of the ophthalmology department would be carried out by the trust's clinical audit team; offering an ex-gratia payment for the distress caused to Mrs Brett; and offering a meeting to discuss the trust's response. I have a copy of that letter with me this evening and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has seen it, too. I am advised that the meeting referred to in the letter on 19 July 1999 never took place and that Mrs. Brett was unhappy with the compensation that was offered and refused to accept payment.

The review suggested by Mr. Eames and recommended by the Glick report was conducted by the trust's medical director and concluded that glaucoma was managed in a manner equivalent to that in similar NHS units. Those conclusions were shared with Mrs. Brett. The hon. Gentleman rightly drew attention to the fact that Mrs. Brett appears to have exhausted the NHS complaints procedure, so he raised the need for a further specific review of her case. He is legitimately concerned for the welfare of his constituent and wants to ensure that every effort is made to resolve her continuing concerns following her treatment in 1989. I share those concerns, but I do not think that that is the right way forward.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, thanks to the changes we have made, the Commission for Health Improvement now conducts regular inspections and reviews of the performance of NHS hospitals and the quality of care that they provide. I think that the most sensible way I can respond positively to the hon. Gentleman's concerns is to bring them directly to the attention of the Commission for Health Improvement in advance of its visit to West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS trust. My considered opinion—I assure the hon. Gentleman that I have looked at the evidence and the file on the case—is that the best course of action would be for Mrs. Brett to reconsider the meeting offered to her by the trust as part of the package offered following the Glick report. I shall ask the new chief executive of the trust, Mrs. Harrison, to offer Mrs. Brett a meeting to discuss a range of issues referred to by Mr. Eames in his letter of 19 July 1999. I hope that that will meet, at least in part, some of the hon. Gentleman's concerns.

I do not doubt, however, that in this particular instance the NHS complaints procedure left Mrs. Brett and her family feeling considerable anger and unhappiness about her treatment. Her direct experience and that of others like her of both patient participation in the NHS and the complaints procedure itself has had an adverse effect. I hope that the measures that I have set out this evening will ensure that Mrs. Brett's experience of complaining about NHS treatment will not be shared by others in future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 16 October 2001*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## DEATH OF A MEMBER

**Mr. Speaker:** I regret to have to report to the House the death of Jamie Cann Esquire, Member for Ipswich. I am sure that Members in all parts of the House will join me in mourning the loss of a colleague and in extending our sympathy to the hon. Member's family and friends.

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

EQUITABLE LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY

*Ordered,*

That there be laid before this House a Return of the Report of the Financial Services Authority on the review of the regulation of the Equitable Life Assurance Society from 1st January 1999 to 8th December 2000, which Her Majesty's Government is submitting as evidence to the inquiry conducted by Lord Penrose.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## HEALTH

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

### Purley Hospital

1. **Richard Ottaway** (Croydon, South): What plans he has for Purley hospital; and if he will make a statement. [3763]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ms Hazel Blears):** Under the current proposals, Mayday NHS trust is planning to develop a first-class out-patient and diagnostic centre for Purley hospital to serve local residents.

**Richard Ottaway:** I am delighted to hear that. I am glad to hear confirmation.

Is the Minister aware of the concern in the borough of Croydon about the lack of facilities in the south of the borough? In view of that, her statement is very welcome. But on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 as the lowest likelihood and 10 as the highest, what is the likelihood of this actually happening?

**Ms Blears:** I am pleased to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that the likelihood is extremely high. I am aware that it has taken some time for us to achieve progress—I believe that 15 authorities are involved—but I am delighted to inform the hon. Gentleman that he will have a rehabilitation centre, a physiotherapy gym, specialist general practitioner services, breast screening, diabetic retinopathy services, updating of X-ray equipment, and even more. Those services will be greatly appreciated by people in the south of the borough, and this will be a magnificent centre to serve the local community.

### Essex Rivers Healthcare NHS trust

2. **Bob Russell** (Colchester): If he will make additional funding available to appoint a second consultant neurologist for the Essex Rivers Healthcare NHS trust. [3764]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Jacqui Smith):** The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to note that additional funding has been agreed for a second consultant neurologist at Essex Rivers Healthcare NHS trust. The post will be advertised shortly.

**Bob Russell:** That proves the value of tabling questions to get results! Is the Minister aware, however, that as of last week the one consultant has gone, and there is now no consultant neurologist in Colchester? Will she provide all possible support in her Department to resolve the crisis that clearly now exists, and, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that both posts are filled?

**Jacqui Smith:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, some of the issues surrounding the first consultant are the trust's responsibility; but I share his anxiety to ensure that we have the very best neurological service for his constituents. That is why the trust has, I understand, also advertised for locum consultants to help cover the situation, and it is why further support is being provided by the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Department shares his anxiety to ensure that patients in his area are given the best possible service.

**Mr. Bob Blizzard** (Waveney): I suspect that patients in the area covered by the trust sometimes need to be referred to Addenbrookes hospital for brain surgery, as is the case with my constituents. Some of my constituents have to wait quite a long time for such surgery, which is both terrifying and painful. Earlier this year, my hon. Friend's Department told me in a reply that it had recognised the need for additional resources for an additional neurosurgeon at Addenbrookes. Can my hon. Friend give me any idea of what progress has been made in securing that personal service?

**Jacqui Smith:** My hon. Friend is obviously reassured by the success that hon. Members have had today in raising issues about their constituencies. I will write to him further about the specific issues he has raised in relation to Addenbrookes, but I assure him that the Government's proposals in the NHS plan to ensure that we have 7,500 more consultants by 2004 are important in the medium term and, moreover, will guarantee that in the

shorter term his constituents and Addenbrookes hospital receive the necessary support and investment that the Government are providing.

**Mrs. Marion Roe** (Broxbourne): Does the Minister accept that one of the questions that will be in the mind of any newly appointed consultant neurologist for Essex Rivers Healthcare NHS trust will be "When will the Government introduce their ban on consultants' working in private practice?" Can she tell us whether she or any of her colleagues has estimated the number of doctors who would be lost to the national health service as a result?

**Jacqui Smith:** Of course the way in which we use our staff in the health service is vital, and negotiations on staffing issues are under way. I assure the hon. Lady, as I assured my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Blizzard), that this Government recognise the importance not only of how we use the staff but of the number of staff. That is why we are investing in NHS staff and why there are already more consultants under this Government and there will be even more in the future.

## Specialist Hospital Services

4. **Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): If he will make a statement on the future of regional specialist hospital services in north-west London. [3766]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. John Hutton):** On 8 October, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State approved plans to concentrate specialist heart and lung services in a redevelopment of the Royal Brompton and Harefield hospitals on the Paddington basin site in west London and to maintain services at Hammersmith hospital. The decisions to create a specialist renal service at Hammersmith hospital and to centralise specialist children's services at St. Mary's were made at health authority level in December 2000.

A review led by the NHS eastern regional office is considering options for the future of the cancer centre at Mount Vernon hospital in Northwood.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Does not the Government's decision to close Harefield hospital demonstrate that new Labour cares much more for the interests of property developers and the money men than for those of patients in north-west London and nationwide, who have made it clear in their scores of thousands that they want the hospital to remain open? Can the Minister give an assurance that the cancer centre at Mount Vernon hospital will not go the same way?

**Mr. Hutton:** I understand fully the hon. Gentleman's commitment to the hospital in his constituency—all hon. Members would feel the same—but I want to rebut firmly the ludicrous suggestion that the decision was made in the interests of property developers. My right hon. Friend's decision was motivated purely and simply by what is in the best interests of the millions of people in London and the south-east who will benefit from this major investment in cardiothoracic and other new hospital services for the wider population that the redevelopment will serve.

I understand why the hon. Gentleman finds the decision difficult and I have every sympathy with him, but it does not advance the tone or substance of the debate for him to reduce it to such a level.

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the Government's excellent record of investment in the health service in Hillingdon, with £500,000 for the modernisation of accident and emergency, £1.5 million announced last week for the modernisation of maternity services, as well as a new mental health unit and three new medical centres in the south of the borough? However, the local community is shocked at the decision on Harefield. I seek an assurance that, before any decision is made on Mount Vernon, he will meet the Hillingdon Members, including the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and myself.

**Mr. Hutton:** Certainly, I can do that. I thank my hon. Friend for pointing out some of the other decisions that the Government have taken that will benefit not only his constituents but those of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood. Services are not likely to move from Harefield until 2007.

**Mr. Andrew Lansley** (South Cambridgeshire): Will the Minister publish the clinical information and evidence on outcomes in the free-standing cardiothoracic centres as compared with those in which services are provided in integrated institutions such as the one proposed at Paddington basin? That information will be considered by other cardiothoracic institutes in similar situations elsewhere.

**Mr. Hutton:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we published a consultation document in September on the wider review of cardiothoracic services, and that will contain a lot of the information that he seeks. I understand that the Harefield hospital is the only stand-alone unit providing cardiothoracic transplant services. Elsewhere, they are being provided in a different format. I hope that he understands that we have given these issues the greatest consideration and have taken our decision in the wider interests of the NHS as a whole, including the many millions of people who use the services outside the Ruislip-Northwood constituency.

**Ms Karen Buck** (Regent's Park and Kensington, North): I sympathise with the anxieties of people in Ruislip-Northwood, but my constituents in north Paddington very warmly welcome the decision on the development at the new hospital site by St. Mary's. The chief executive of the Royal Brompton and Harefield trust said that it will create

"the most advanced heart and lung centre in Europe, side by side with the new St Mary's."

The only reservation that my constituents have concerns the fact that the new hospital development will not be fully operational until 2007. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that the funding decisions for the other developments at St. Mary's will be forthcoming soon, so that we can get on with creating what will be an absolutely cutting edge new hospital for the 21st century?

**Mr. Hutton:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We want the new world-class centre on the St. Mary's site to be

available at the earliest possible opportunity. She referred to the view of clinicians. The House should bear in mind the views of Sir Terence English, a distinguished cardiothoracic surgeon, chairman of the expert advisory panel on heart and lung services and a former president of the Royal College of Surgeons, who said that the decision

"represents the most logical response to the case for change across west London."

I agree strongly with that.

The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) asked me—it feels like a long time ago—about Mount Vernon hospital, and I apologise to him and to the House for not dealing with that point. The long-term review group that is looking at the issues has published three possible ways forward in relation to the review of cancer services at Mount Vernon. No final decision has been made and any such decision would have to be made subject to full public consultation. We have arranged for all right hon. and hon. Members who might be affected by the changes at Mount Vernon hospital to be specially briefed next week by the NHS about the issues.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** In view of the Minister's answer, I propose to raise these matters on the Adjournment.

## Hepatitis C

5. **Dr. Brian Iddon** (Bolton, South-East): If he will make a statement on his plans for a national strategy to combat the hepatitis C virus. [3767]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ms Hazel Blears):** In March this year, the Government set up a multidisciplinary steering group to assist in the development of a strategic approach to combat hepatitis C. We will be publishing a consultation paper early in the new year.

**Dr. Iddon:** I thank my hon. Friend for her answer, which is good news. Is she aware that consultants now consider HCV to be as big a threat as HIV? With possibly 500,000 people infected—many without knowing it—does she agree that there is an urgent need to prevent the further spread of the virus by, for example, providing more and better needle exchange schemes and the provision of confidential but accessible screening procedures?

**Ms Blears:** I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter and of the assiduous way in which he has pursued it. The Government have set up the multidisciplinary group in recognition of the importance of hepatitis C as a public health issue. Members may be aware that drug misuse via injection is the greatest risk factor for hepatitis C. We have issued guidance to those working with drug users, and 93 per cent. of health authorities now have effective needle exchange schemes in place. However, much more work is required to alert people to the possibility of infection with hepatitis C and to make sure that screening, counselling, support, prevention and treatment are at the top of the agenda for the multidisciplinary group.

We have set it a challenging time scale to come up with a report and I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will play a key role in forming the recommendations.

**Mr. Andrew Selous** (South-West Bedfordshire): Do the Government have any plans to compensate people infected with hepatitis C through NHS treatment in the past?

**Ms Blears:** The hon. Gentleman may be aware of a judgment earlier this year, when a successful claim was made against the National Blood Authority under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 concerning 111 people infected with hepatitis C by blood transfusions between 1 March 1988 and September 1991. The Government have no further plans to compensate those persons infected by transfusions. The matter has been fully investigated. The NHS normally compensates people where it is in the wrong and where action has been taken for which it would be liable. That is not the position in this case and there are no plans for further compensation.

## General Medical Council

6. **Mr. Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley): What plans he has for reform of the General Medical Council. [3769]

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Alan Milburn):** I shall be announcing our proposals for the GMC reform when we respond to the report of the Bristol Royal infirmary inquiry in due course.

**Mr. Barron:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that the GMC has consulted widely about changes to its structure, and that one of the major recommendations will be a reduction in the size of the organisation from 104 members to 35? Does he support that change? Will he make sure that we have time in this Session to make any legislative amendments so that the proposed changes to many areas of the GMC's work can be made as swiftly as possible?

**Mr. Milburn:** I can assure my hon. Friend that we will look carefully at the GMC proposals, and I pay tribute to the role that he has played in the discussions as a lay member of the council. We need to look at the issues in the round. We will produce a response to the GMC proposals not just on its size, but on its functions and the timeliness with which it acts. We must get the balance right, ensuring that the system is more open and accountable than at present without unduly penalising good doctors. The headlines in the newspapers are often full of stories about bad doctors, but it is important to remember that the national health service is full of good doctors. We need a regulatory environment that ensures that innovation spreads and that people are prepared to take the appropriate risks on behalf of their patients and, indeed, modern medicine.

**Mr. David Tredinnick** (Bosworth): Will the Secretary of State ensure that any reform of the GMC includes representatives who are conversant with integrated health care that involves the use of complementary and orthodox medicine together? Throughout the last Parliament I regularly raised with the Secretary of State the fact that the number of complementary practitioners in the health

service had fallen under his stewardship and since the abolition of GP fundholding. Will he undertake to read "Points of Engagement", a report that has just been published by the Foundation for Integrated Medicine, which makes that point clear? What will he do to ensure that some of the 50,000 complementary practitioners in Britain get a fair chance to practise in the health service?

**Mr. Milburn:** I am prepared to read the report if the hon. Gentleman will stop asking me questions about complementary medicine. He has been an assiduous questioner on the issue for month after month, after month and he knows the Government's position. I am not sure that complementary practitioners will have a role to play in the reform of the GMC, but the hon. Gentleman raises important issues that concern many people. We responded to the House of Lords report on the issue and I will, of course, undertake to look at the report he mentioned.

**Paul Farrelly** (Newcastle-under-Lyme): My right hon. Friend will be aware that last week an inquiry by North Staffordshire hospital into a ventilator project for premature babies finally reported. Will he urge the GMC to complete its inquiries into the issue speedily? To restore public confidence, will he also ask the NHS executive to inquire further into allegations of forged parental consents and ask that parents, including my constituents, Carl and Deborah Henshall, are interviewed by the GMC and any such NHS inquiry, because they were not interviewed by those conducting the hospital's internal investigation?

**Mr. Milburn:** If my hon. Friend would care to write to me about the points that he raises, I will gladly look into them.

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (South Staffordshire): If the Secretary of State is minded to accept the advice of my hon. and persistent Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), will he bear in mind that one eminent lady QC has demonstrated recently her wholehearted belief in complementary medicines?

**Mr. Milburn:** This is becoming a gathering tendency on the Opposition Benches, and I am slightly concerned that it should also include the hon. Gentleman who I would have thought had more sense.

## Maternity Services

7. **Mr. Gareth R. Thomas** (Harrow, West): What action he is taking to improve maternity services. [3770]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Jacqui Smith):** To improve maternity services we announced last week the details of an investment of £100 million capital to modernise maternity facilities. We are using the maternity and neonatal work force working group to make recommendations on the staffing and configuration of maternity services and taking special action to increase midwife numbers.

**Mr. Thomas:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her reply and for her decision to fund in full the £500,000 bid for vital new equipment at the maternity unit at Northwick Park hospital, which serves my constituents. Is she aware that the complete refurbishment of that unit has been necessary for some time and will she promise to be sympathetic when the business case for that bid is presented to her Department shortly?

**Jacqui Smith:** As my hon. Friend points out, we have been sympathetic to the full extent of the £500,000 investment in his local hospital, which is an important provision in terms of the improvements that will be made for low and high-risk mothers. We will, as always, listen sympathetically to well-made cases for extra capital investment, but I am sure that he will not expect me to provide an answer today.

**Mr. Tim Boswell** (Daventry): All capital investment in this area is most welcome, especially that being made in my own part of the south midlands, but will the Minister also bear in mind the importance of maintaining the emphasis on research into the remaining killers of babies? Of particular importance are the studies of eclampsia and pre-eclampsia. They are the biggest remaining child killers, and also pose a substantial threat to mothers' lives.

**Jacqui Smith:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point about the need to maintain research and to improve antenatal and post-natal care provision for mothers. The national service framework for children will include consideration of standards in maternity services to ensure that there are evidence-based guidelines and standards for the provision of maternity care, and that there is continuity of antenatal and post-natal care. Undoubtedly, issues such as those raised by the hon. Gentleman wil be part of that continuing consideration.

**Dr. Phyllis Starkey** (Milton Keynes, South-West): On behalf of my constituents, I very much welcome the £421,000 that has been allocated to Milton Keynes general hospital. However, I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that pregnancy outcome depends greatly on matters such as smoking, poverty and poor housing. What is she doing to ensure that primary care trusts maintain an emphasis on public health as well on the very welcome investments being made in acute services?

**Jacqui Smith:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. The Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper)—who, as the House will know, is carrying out intensive and personal research into maternity services at present—is leading work on the question of health inequalities. The aim is to ensure that precisely those public health issues mentioned by my hon. Friend are dealt with—both in respect of pregnant women and in terms of achieving healthy childbirth and healthy children later in life. The work will also ensure that those issues are taken into account in the way in which we provide, commission and deliver our health services.

**Mr. Peter Lilley** (Hitchin and Harpenden): The Minister's claim to be improving maternity services will ring pretty false in my constituency and in neighbouring constituencies, as it coincides with the announcement that Hemel Hempstead maternity services are to close, with all women's and children's services being transferred to Watford. How can anyone be expected to believe that that closure is temporary, as the Government have claimed up

to now, when today's announcement makes it clear that Hemel Hempstead will be the only hospital not to receive a penny for improvement or investment in its maternity services? Can the Minister tell us, hand on heart, that that unit will reopen in due course?

**Jacqui Smith:** Changes to the local provision of services can be difficult for individual areas, but they are matters for local discussion. It is for health authorities and trusts to decide on service provision, taking into account local people's needs, evidence of effectiveness, and available resources. However, I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that the new and independent reconfiguration panel will take those factors into account on reaching decisions on any future changes in local maternity services. Clear criteria exist for the assessment of any proposed changes, and I assure the right hon. Gentleman that they will be applied.

**Ms Joan Walley** (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for the additional money made available for maternity services at the North Staffordshire Hospital trust. It is much appreciated, but I am concerned that women who want to deliver their babies at home should be provided for. Will my hon. Friend say what extra help will be given to allow women the opportunity to deliver their babies at home? Will she also review carefully the new proposals to increase the penalties when there is a problem with home delivery?

**Jacqui Smith:** My hon. Friend is right to highlight the important matter of choice for women. Some women have considerable choice in maternity care—including the ability to decide where they would like to give birth—but that degree of choice is not as widely available as perhaps it should be. Not everyone has a full range of options, such as home birth, even when those options are clinically safe. That is why, as I said earlier, maternity services are being included in the national service framework for children in a bid to ensure that every woman can exercise safe and informed choices throughout maternity and childbirth. It is also why the increased numbers of midwives that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced earlier this year to the Royal College of Midwives will be important in helping to promote choice.

I undertake to consider seriously the points that my hon. Friend has made about the fine regarding lay assistance at home births.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): The Minister will be aware of the excellent report that the Health Select Committee published in the early 1990s on maternity services—

**Mr. Peter Luff** (Mid-Worcestershire): Under very fine chairmanship.

**Mr. Winterton:** Indeed, I was its chairman at the time. The report stressed the importance of midwives in maternity services. The Minister is clearly aware that there is a shortage of midwives, but there is also an increasing demand from women to deliver at home, as the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) said. What will the Minister do about dramatically increasing the number of midwives? Will she tell the House at whose behest the penalty for lay assistance at home births has been increased? Its dramatic increase is a great disincentive for women to deliver at home, which many wish to do.

**Jacqui Smith:** I undertook to consider lay assistance in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North. I also undertake that if I find the time, I will read the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred, which I am sure is a major contribution to the issue.

The hon. Gentleman rightly emphasises the need for more midwives. That is why, speaking earlier this year at the Royal College of Midwives conference, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that by the end of 2002 there will be an extra 500 midwives working in the NHS, with an extra 2,000 on the wards within the next five years. To encourage more midwives to return to practise, we have recently announced a boost of at least £1,500 plus for returners and extra help with travel, books and child care. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that training places have already increased substantially since 1997—there are now 235 more training places than in 1996–97—and we have recently seen a fall in vacancy rates for midwives.

**Sandra Gidley** (Romsey): To follow the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), bearing in mind that the vacancy rate for midwives is 8 per cent. in the south-east and 17 per cent. in London, will the Minister say whether the cost of living allowance has made any difference to the retention of midwives and whether she has any plans to improve recruitment further? Will she also confirm whether the 500 extra midwives are full-time equivalents, or does the figure include part-time workers?

**Jacqui Smith:** Some of the proposals to which the hon. Lady referred have only been in place since April. It is important that we maintain our concern about and commitment to ensuring that extra staff enter the NHS and that midwives are in post. I have already outlined some of the considerable measures that we are taking to ensure that we attract midwives back to the profession. We have already seen some success in terms of falling vacancy rates and the number of extra midwives who are in training. I assure the hon. Lady that we will maintain that activity to deliver on the pledge that my right hon. Friend made to the Royal College of Midwives.

**Ms Julia Drown** (South Swindon): I am pleased to hear that my hon. Friend wants to do more to support women who make an informed choice to have a home birth. Can she help clear the current confusion with regard to health authority duties? Some women who make an informed choice to have a home birth are told that their health authority does not have a duty to provide a midwife but must simply provide general maternity services. The regulations are not at all clear. Will my hon. Friend ensure that matters are clarified so that women who make an informed choice can be properly supported at home?

**Jacqui Smith:** My hon. Friend makes the important point that the extent of choice for women in their maternity care depends on the number of midwives and the resources in the system. That is why the increased number of midwives and the increased resources going into the system are important. However, my hon. Friend

is right that we need to look further at how we extend maternity choices so that women in all parts of the country, not just some, have greater choice, including the choice, where it is appropriate, of having a safe home birth.

That will be part of the consideration in the national service framework for children on which work has already started.

**Mr. Simon Burns** (West Chelmsford): Notwithstanding the extra money that the Government have announced—including some for St. John's hospital in my constituency—which is welcomed by the official Opposition, does the Minister accept that the level of post-natal care provided through community maternity units is far superior to that provided by overworked maternity units in our hospitals? In addition to funding, what will the Government do to raise the standards of hospital maternity units to ensure that they reach the high quality of care in the community units?

**Jacqui Smith:** I begin by welcoming the hon. Gentleman to his new post. This is our second meeting today and I am sure that it is only the second of many. He raises an important point about the need to ensure that, whether women receive their care in a hospital setting—perhaps because of the need for special care for their babies or a particular high risk—or have the baby in a community setting, that care is of an equally high standard. We need to tackle that in the national service framework, but in the short term our investment in maternity services in hospitals, in midwives and in community services, including devolution of more power and funding to those services, is important in ensuring that wherever women receive their care it is of a uniformly high standard.

## Coronary Care

8. **Mr. David Crausby** (Bolton, North-East): What plans he has to improve heart services. [3771]

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Alan Milburn):** Improving heart services is a priority for the national health service. Our 10-year blueprint for reform includes speeding up waiting times for heart operations and expanding primary care services to try to prevent coronary heart disease in the first place.

**Mr. Crausby:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. The national service framework for coronary heart disease mentions smoking and tobacco advertising. Can we be reassured that, by banning tobacco advertising, the Government are determined to help people to stop smoking?

**Mr. Milburn:** Yes, that is our manifesto commitment. As my hon. Friend is aware, the manifesto is for a Parliament and not only for a year. We remain committed to that measure and will try to find the appropriate time for it, although he will be aware of the special pressures on the legislative programme now. None the less, we will try to do so as soon as we are able. We also remain absolutely committed to tackling the health impact of tobacco consumption. That is why we have moved our position from one of simply exhorting people to give up smoking to providing help so that they can do so.

Probably one of the most important things that we have done, and it is one of the most important public health measures to be introduced in recent decades, is to make nicotine replacement therapy and Zyban available on prescription. The results have been very welcome indeed. We estimate that about 65,000 smokers have been helped to give up thanks to the additional assistance that we have been able to make available to them. That will have a long as well as a short-term impact on both coronary heart disease and cancer.

**Dr. Evan Harris** (Oxford, West and Abingdon): The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that those working in primary care, who are struggling to implement the NSF, want smoking cessation clinics and they want to increase the prescription of cholesterol-lowering drugs, but no earmarked funds are available. Many general practitioners have told me that they have to cut another service to provide for those. Does he also recognise the problem that exists in respect of elective heart surgery? On the one hand he says that the top priority is to ensure that no patient waits more than 18 months—it is soon to be 15—but on the other he says that clinical priorities should determine the order in which patients are treated. Patients who used to be operated on within four weeks for unstable angina or for a bypass often have to wait months because the 18-month waiters jump the queue as a managerial rather than a clinical priority.

**Mr. Milburn:** That was a long shopping list, but not as long as normal from the hon. Gentleman. On those two issues, I can offer him a double reassurance. On prescribing statins, for lowering cholesterol levels to prevent against further heart attacks, and aspirin and beta blockers, there is real progress. I can report to him that in the last year alone the number of prescriptions for statins has increased by well over one third—by 37 per cent. That is real progress. We all know that although it is often the glamorous side of cardiac care that attracts most attention, actually the biggest impact that we can make is probably in primary care, so that is a welcome move in the right direction.

As for the other issues about which the hon. Gentleman is concerned, let me be candid with him: people wait far too long for a heart operation in this country. That is undoubtedly true and he knows the reasons. There has been a history of neglect and underinvestment, particularly in our cardiac services. It is that that we are trying to put right. There is extra, earmarked money going in. I put an extra £50 million in to ensure more heart operations, and I am pleased to be able to tell him that the NHS has made very, very good progress indeed. We were originally due to complete a further 3,000 heart operations by March next year; in fact, that target has been achieved ahead of schedule. That is bringing life-saving surgery to many thousands of people, and I hope that before too long we can make even faster progress to ensure precisely that the cases with the highest clinical need are dealt with most quickly.

**Helen Jackson** (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I thank my right hon. Friend for making the right decision as regards the continuation of the transplant unit at the Northern general hospital in Sheffield. Will he accept that this has been a hugely popular decision? We recognise that advice had been given to the Secretary of State to the contrary,

and we are always happy to offer congratulations when Ministers use their own judgment—and that of the public in Yorkshire and round about—and make the right decision.

**Mr. Milburn:** The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Salford (Ms Blears), has just whispered to me that I must be losing my touch because I have made a popular decision. I am glad to accept the congratulations of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Helen Jackson). It was the right decision to take. We want to expand heart services to the public and we want to undertake more transplants rather than fewer; and of course there is a big effort being made across the country to increase the number of organ donations. In those circumstances, it seemed pretty odd to me to be reducing cardiothoracic transplant services, not only in Sheffield but in Birmingham and Manchester too. I am pleased to be able to say that the right decision has been taken, that those services can now look forward to a good future and that, hopefully, we can help to bring some good to many people.

## Cottage Hospitals

9. **Mr. David Cameron** (Witney): What plans he has to safeguard and expand cottage and community hospitals. [3772]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. John Hutton):** Community and cottage hospitals play an important role within the national health service. They provide an essential service to patients, especially in the recuperative phases of recovery from illness or accident, and will help us to meet the target of introducing an additional 5,000 intermediate care beds by 2004.

**Mr. Cameron:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that answer. He may recall that the Burford hospital in my constituency was closed during the last Parliament. Is he aware that a local body called the Phoenix project has raised money to buy the building and provide a range of services and clinics to promote healthy living, which is exactly in line with Government policy? Will he encourage the local primary care trust to get on and sell the building to the Phoenix trust so that that can go ahead? I know that he may not have all the details but time is running out; it is urgent and I should really welcome his intervention in this matter. We want to save our local health centre.

**Mr. Hutton:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on raising that point and of course I am more than happy to look into the issues that he has raised.

**Lawrie Quinn** (Scarborough and Whitby): I welcome the introduction of the new primary care trust for my area of North Yorkshire. For the first time in probably a decade or more, the Whitby community hospital feels that it has a future—that it has a role to play in undertaking proper health care for people in the Whitby and North York moors area of my county. Will the Minister take every opportunity to make sure that the people who live in the remoter, rural parts of the county of North Yorkshire get better access to community hospitals such as the Whitby community hospital and that the full intentions of the primary care trust idea can be brought to the forefront?

**Mr. Hutton:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend—I have had the pleasure of visiting Scarborough with him and seeing some of the improvements in the NHS in relation to the care of the elderly that have taken place there; they are very long overdue. Older people are the largest users of health care services in this country, and it is very important for us to continue to improve the range of care services available to them. My hon. Friend raises a particularly important issue about access to those services in rural communities, but that is precisely the reason why we set up primary care trusts: they can assess those needs and ensure that the necessary arrangements are put in place so that older people can gain access to the wider range of health care services that we are committed to establishing.

**Mr. Oliver Heald** (North-East Hertfordshire): Does the Minister agree that cottage and community hospitals are more vital than ever as places of convalescence, given the huge increase in the number of elderly people—680,000 this year—who are in hospital beds because they have nowhere else to go? This morning, the Prime Minister spoke of the problem of bed blocking, but is it not a fact that 50,000 care beds have been lost in the past five years due to Government policy? Will the Minister now apologise for the misery and distress caused to so many elderly people? Will he tell us when that trend will end, so that we can see a picture for the future in which the number of care beds does not decline year after year?

**Mr. Hutton:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new responsibilities and hope that in future he will do his homework a little more thoroughly than he has done today. He complains about the lack of beds in the NHS, so I shall remind him who cut the number of beds in the NHS.

**Mr. Heald:** You did.

**Mr. Hutton:** No, the Conservative party did. Under the Conservative Government, 60,000 beds were lost in the NHS, and the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman should not shout at anyone, but especially not at the Minister.

**Mr. Hutton:** I apologise to the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends if I have excited them. They do not like the truth, and the truth is that 50,000 beds have not been lost in the care homes sector. The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong about that. Of course, we have recently announced a substantial additional investment in the NHS and local authorities to ensure that the provision of care for older people is right. I am afraid that it ill behoves the hon. Gentleman, given his new responsibilities, to lecture the Government about a lack of funding, given that he would not even match our social services funding during the previous Parliament.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): Is my right hon. Friend aware that bed blocking is the direct

result of the closure of community and cottage hospitals and, indeed, that it is nonsense to suggest moving people to private sector hospitals, such as those run by Westminster Care, which was exposed at the weekend as doing a very bad job, while we allow the closure of NHS beds and the movement of NHS staff to the private sector? I hope that he will resist that very actively and clearly in the future.

**Mr. Hutton:** We need to ensure that a range of provision is available for older people, and I can tell my hon. Friend that there are almost 2,500 additional NHS intermediate care beds in England over and above the figure that existed in 1999. What is really important in this context is that older people, as well as other patients in the NHS, get access to the best available care. If we can use and commission appropriate care services at the highest level in the private sector, we fully intend to do so.

## General Practitioners

10. **Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham): If he will publish whole-time equivalent target figures for additional GPs in service by 2004. [3773]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. John Hutton):** The NHS plan commits us to providing at least 2,000 more general practitioners by 2004. The number of whole-time equivalent GPs resulting from that increase will clearly depend on a number of factors, but we expect that the overwhelming majority will be full-time.

**Tim Loughton:** Using the phrase "will clearly depend" is not the same as saying that there will be 2,000 doctors. Is it not now patently clear that all the Secretary of State's and the Prime Minister's much trumpeted claims about new doctor and nurse recruitment do not bear close scrutiny? It later transpired that of the 2,000 extra GPs promised in the next four years more than half were in the pipeline already. Is it not the reality that, as the British Medical Association has made patently clear, whole-time equivalent GP numbers are static and that many experienced doctors are still leaving the NHS or are set to leave or retire early, when we can ill afford to lose them? If the Secretary of State or the Minister cannot guarantee that promising 2,000 extra doctors will actually mean that there will be 2,000 extra, how can we take their pledges on nurse recruitment or any of their other election promises seriously?

**Mr. Hutton:** There will be 2,000 extra GPs, and we have made that very clear. The hon. Gentleman's arguments lack both consistency and credibility. On consistency, it is worth pointing out to the Conservatives that they cut the number of GPs in training by 20 per cent. between 1991 and 1996. Had the number been maintained at its 1991 level, there would be nearly 700 more GPs in practice today and 1,000 more by 2004. It is not terribly flattering to the hon. Gentleman to pretend that he is committed to a policy when his record in Government shows that he took the opposite approach.

In addition, the hon. Gentleman criticises us for lack of ambition in recruiting GPs. The Tory manifesto for the last election contained no pledge to increase the number of GPs in the national health service: not a single GP was promised. We are determined to reverse the trend that we inherited and are increasing the number of GPs as well as the number of full-time equivalent GPs in the NHS.

**Judy Mallaber** (Amber Valley): I have been visiting GP practices in my constituency in recent weeks and have seen improved services such as counselling and smoking cessation. Will my right hon. Friend assess the impact of the new primary medical services system and the appointment of nurse practitioners and other clinicians in enabling practices and GPs to operate more efficiently and flexibly? Will he also reconsider the NHS information systems to ensure that there is proper and easy access to the information that is required by GPs and PCTs?

**Mr. Hutton:** Overall, the introduction of PMS has had a hugely beneficial impact on the delivery of primary care services. We intend to continue those initiatives to ensure that GPs and their patients have the greatest access to choice. PMS has allowed us to make sure that we can provide primary care services in some of the most underprivileged and deprived parts of Britain. That is an important step forward.

My hon. Friend is also right about information services for GPs and primary care practice. It is important that we improve those for the benefit of not only GPs but their patients. That is why we are embarking on a major investment in information technology upgrading across the NHS, which will benefit many people.

**Derek Conway** (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Is the Minister aware that recruiting additional GPs will prove difficult in my constituency because the Bexley primary care trust is just under £8 million short of its capitation weighting? Will he address that problem? Although it may be comfortable for him to live in the past, he has been in office for a while and it is time that he took responsibility for the shortfall that is affecting our areas.

**Mr. Hutton:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wants more money spent on the NHS. So do we, but we are providing the extra resources, unlike the Conservatives who clearly would not have been able to. He knows that we are reviewing the formula that determines how resources are distributed across the NHS. That has not been completed, but I hope that it will be shortly. I hope that he will be able to endorse and support one change—the emphasis that we are placing on the role of primary care trusts as the main conduits through which resources reach the front line of the NHS. It is better for the NHS for those to be as close to the front line as possible. I am sure that that will benefit his constituents and all patients in Bexley.

## Endometriosis

11. **Jane Griffiths** (Reading, East): If he will make it his policy to recognise endometriosis as a long-term cyclical condition. [3774]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Jacqui Smith):** Endometriosis is a serious condition that can affect the lives of many women and their families throughout their reproductive years. The symptoms of endometriosis and their effect on individual women vary

greatly. There are, however, acknowledged treatments and surgical procedures for this condition that can help very many women.

**Jane Griffiths:** I thank my hon. Friend for that reply which will be welcomed by many of my constituents and, indeed, the many thousands of women around the country who suffer from endometriosis. Can she assure me that steps will be taken to improve and speed up diagnosis? Many women first present with symptoms in their teens, and it may be 10 years until they are finally diagnosed and receive appropriate treatment.

**Jacqui Smith:** My hon. Friend is right to suggest that we need to ensure greater awareness of endometriosis. The NHS plan gives us the opportunity to improve, for example, the training of GPs and gynaecologists. The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), had a useful meeting with the National Endometriosis Society, and officials are due to meet the society again this week. It is funded partly by the Department of Health's grant programme, and we are very willing to offer advice and assistance on how to raise awareness of the problem. In addition, the NHS plan will allow us to ensure that GPs and gynaecologists are in the best possible position to provide the treatment that women clearly deserve.

## Out-patient Appointments

12. **Dr. Jenny Tonge** (Richmond Park): What plans he has to reduce the number of patients who fail to keep out-patient appointments. [3775]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ms Hazel Blears):** As part of the NHS plan, all out-patient appointments will be pre-booked by the end of 2005. Patients will be able to choose well in advance a date and time that is convenient to them.

**Dr. Tonge:** I thank the Minister for that response. I trust that the trusts that will have to implement the system will receive the finance due to them so that they can do so, and that the Government will be reporting on progress in achieving the targets that they have set themselves. Does the Minister think that, given continuing long waits to see, for example, a consultant or a radiologist in the first place, more should be done to convince patients who miss appointments that they are wasting NHS time and money and making the wait for their fellow patients much longer?

**Ms Blears:** Yes, the hon. Lady is right to say that more steps need to be taken to convince people about the cost to the service. Many hospitals now publicise such costs so that patients are aware of them. Many also telephone to remind people of their appointments, which often results in tremendous reductions in the number of appointments that are not kept. We are doing what works.

There will be more investment. There is an outline business case for a new electronic system to ensure that all out-patient appointments can be booked in advance. The very best way of getting patients to attend is to involve them in their treatment—for example, so that they feel ownership of their appointment—and to make appointments that are convenient for them, for their child care and for their looking after the rest of the family. That is the way forward.

**Mr. Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield): Is my hon. Friend making excuses for patients? I recently visited a Leeds teaching hospital and was told by the receptionist that 40 per cent. of people with appointments on that day did not show. That is a disgrace and a misuse of the health service. Surely we do not need electronic devices. A simple deposit could be paid to be returned when one showed for one's appointment. Could not we return to some basic common sense in the health service?

**Ms Blears:** There is clear evidence that electronic booking systems are working. At Sandwell hospital, the percentage of patients who do not appear has fallen from 6 to 1 per cent; in north-west London, the figure has fallen from 13 to 6 per cent; and in Birmingham, the percentage of appointments that patients failed to keep has fallen from 20 to 5 per cent. as a result of electronic booking. As usual, what this Government do is what works.

## Emergency Services

13. **Mr. James Plaskitt** (Warwick and Leamington): What plans he has to improve emergency services. [3776]

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Alan Milburn):** The Department is currently undertaking a review of the provision of emergency care services, with the help of NHS staff. In the meantime, the extra investment that we are making in accident and emergency departments, GPs' out-of-hours services, NHS Direct and, of course, the ambulance service are designed to ensure that more patients can be treated more quickly.

**Mr. Plaskitt:** In Warwick, we shall be opening a brand new state-of-the-art accident and emergency unit in December. It is the product not only of specific Government funding but of substantial community fundraising. However, attendance figures at the A and E are rising sharply year on year. Is my right hon. Friend confident that, across the programme as a whole, we are investing enough to meet increasing capacity needs?

**Mr. Milburn:** Yes, I am. Not only are we investing in the front line—A and E services—but, as my hon. Friend will be aware, just last week we made £300 million available to ease pressures on beds in hospitals and to deal with the vexed problem of delayed discharges. Providing that we keep making the investment and implementing reforms alongside it, I am confident that we can get better and faster care to patients.

**Dr. Liam Fox** (Woodspring): Does the Secretary of State agree that the Government have three duties when faced with a biological threat such as anthrax? First, they should ensure adequate intelligence to warn of potential threats. Secondly, they should develop strategies and responses to deal with possible attacks. Thirdly, they should ensure that doctors are given sufficient information

to maximise early diagnosis. Is he satisfied that he and his colleagues can give the public complete reassurances in those three areas?

**Mr. Milburn:** I can offer assurance on those three points. I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question and for his support on the issue. I have briefed him and the Liberal Democrat spokesman on the necessary preparations that we have made.

It is the Government's obligation to prepare for all eventualities, however remote the risk might be. As right hon. and hon. Members may be aware, there have been a number of suspect incidents today. The emergency services have responded and investigations are taking place. It is important that people remain calm and go about their normal lives. I recognise that this is an anxious time for all concerned, but the incidents have demonstrated that the contingency plans developed by front-line emergency services within the NHS and the police are effective and can be deployed rapidly.

It might be useful and for the benefit of the House if I set out what we have done more generally since the appalling events of 11 September. First, since the atrocities took place, the chief medical officer has reviewed all our plans for protecting the public from any possible biological or chemical attack. Secondly, extensive contingency planning is already in place based on guidance that we issued to the NHS last year, well before the appalling events in New York, Washington and elsewhere in America. New guidance has been issued and we are planning to issue still further guidance.

Thirdly, we have taken the appropriate steps to secure additional supplies of drugs and equipment for use in an emergency. Fourthly, we have cascaded details to doctors about how they can access information from the Public Health Laboratory Service website on signs and symptoms of anthrax. Finally, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, I signed in Washington last week a joint United Kingdom-United States agreement on protecting our people from bio-terrorism by pooling our intelligence, our expertise and our planning.

We have taken those steps not because there are specific threats against us, but because it would be foolish to be anything other than vigilant. I believe that we should take great comfort from the fact that in this country we have some of the very best public health experts in the world, and in our emergency services we have people who have a hugely impressive track record of dealing with extremely demanding situations. We shall, of course, keep all our plans under active review.

**Dr. Fox:** Does the Secretary of State agree that anthrax is, in fact, a low-risk threat? It is not transmitted from person to person and is therefore an ineffective agent for inflicting mass damage. However, it is a good agent of terror if a few cases result in widespread panic. Is it not essential that inside and outside the House we deal with the threat in a proportionate manner, so that we do not create unnecessary fear and thereby do a favour not to the public but to the terrorists?

**Mr. Milburn:** The hon. Gentleman is right about anthrax. The best expert advice is that it is impossible to pass on anthrax from person to person and, as he knows, we have good plans in place to deal with it. The best intelligence that we have is that it would be extremely difficult for anyone to deliver a quantity of anthrax sufficient to cause harm to a large number of people. However, as we can see from events in America, the result of anthrax attacks has been to spread fear among a large number of people.

I know that many people on both sides of the Atlantic fear both the prospect of further terrorist attacks and the form that they might take. We all understand those concerns, but as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, it is important that fear does not win. Fear is the terrorists' victory. I repeat: there is no need for public panic. Our response—all our responses—in the House, among the public and in the media is and must be proportionate. Our duty is to go on planning for all eventualities.

## Michelin, Burnley

3.34 pm

**Mr. Peter Pike** (Burnley): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 24, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

the major announcement, made within the past two hours by the Michelin management, that production will cease at their Burnley factory in March next year, with the effect of causing 452 people to lose their employment in Burnley.

Patrick Lepercq, Michelin Tyre managing director, and John Lancaster, manager at the Burnley factory, broke that serious and tragic news in Burnley today. Michelin opened its factory in Burnley in 1960; it was the company's second tyre factory in the United Kingdom, the first being the Stoke factory, which opened in the 1920s. Stoke has ceased tyre production—the announcement was made last year—but is to lose another 280 jobs as a result of the latest announcement. The factory in Burnley produced smaller truck tyres.

The news is a major blow to the area, and it is a sad blow to John Lancaster, who has been in touch with me for some time and trying to find a solution to the problems in the tyre industry. He would be the first to say that had it not been for the co-operation of the work force and the unions on site, production would have ceased some years ago. However, that is no consolation to those in Burnley who face the loss of their job, or to their families.

The problem in Burnley is made worse by the fact that it is heavily dependent on the manufacturing sector and aerospace, which are dominant local industries. Other redundancies have already been announced this week at Hurel Hispano and, as we all know, the future looks grim in the aerospace industry at present. Those issues are crucial to Michelin workers, the people of Burnley and the whole manufacturing sector, which is vital to the United Kingdom economy. A debate on the implications of the announcement and the way forward for manufacturing is urgently needed.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman, and have to give my decision without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter that he raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 24. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

## Points of Order

3.36 pm

**Mr. Patrick McLoughlin** (West Derbyshire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder what protection you can give Members who are ill informed and misinformed by the Government about their proposals? Last week when Parliament was recalled, I took the opportunity to table a written question about the calling in of a planning application in my constituency. I had a reply from a Minister yesterday, which said that a colleague would consider the matter, but had not yet come to a conclusion. This morning, I received in the post a letter dated 12 October from the east midlands office, informing me that the Secretary of State had decided against calling the matter in. It was disingenuous of the Government to tell me yesterday that no decision had been taken when, in fact, one had already been reached.

**Mr. Speaker:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will send me the papers and details, and I will look into the matter.

**Miss Julie Kirkbride** (Bromsgrove): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to the final subject raised at Health questions, have you been informed by the House authorities about what we should tell our staff who, on the whole, open our mail and may therefore fear that one of us may receive such substances in our mail? Can you give us any guidance on that matter?

**Mr. Speaker:** As the hon. Lady knows, the Serjeant at Arms is responsible for security, and I believe that he will contact every hon. Member and give advice to staff, both in the House and in constituency offices. I hope that that is of help to the hon. Lady and other hon. Members.

## Coalition against International Terrorism

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

3.38 pm

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Jack Straw):** This is the fourth time since 11 September that the House has had the opportunity to debate the international community's response to the threat of global terrorism. It is right that that should be so; whenever the country and the world face as grave a threat as they do now, the House should more than ever exercise its two central roles as the voice of the nation and as the means by which the Executive are held to account.

In the three prime ministerial statements and the three debates so far, there has rightly been much questioning of the decisions taken by Government, but the proceedings as a whole have been characterised by the widespread bipartisan support for our comprehensive approach. The breadth of that support has been a great source of strength to the country, those of us with responsibility for government and, above all, our armed forces. We in the House may sometimes put our reputations on the line in pursuit of a policy; those in our Army, Navy and Air Force put their lives on the line. They do it readily, they accept orders. They are the finest forces in the world, but the fact that the whole nation is backing them in their endeavours is hugely important to them and their families.

The last statement and debate in the House took place on Monday last week, which was 8 October. The military action had commenced the night before. It has continued for the past nine days. Cruise missiles were launched from a Royal Navy submarine on the first night and again on 13 October. We have continued to be involved in the military action through the provision of refuelling and reconnaissance aircraft and the use of our facilities at Diego Garcia. Our best assessment of the strikes so far is that we have severely damaged elements of the Taliban regime's military capability. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will say more about that later.

However, few conflicts are resolved by military action in a matter of days. This was never going to be one of them. As both President Bush and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear from the outset, the terrain, weather and complexity of the targets mean that we can expect no early conclusion to this campaign. It will take months, not days or weeks. During this period, again as the President and Prime Minister have underlined, we will be considering a range of military options.

**Mr. John Taylor** (Solihull): Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise, in the course of his coalition building, any limits to the maxim, "My enemy's enemy is my friend"?

**Mr. Straw:** I do not believe that that maxim is particularly appropriate in the current circumstances. I understand the implications of the hon. Gentleman's question, but we are being careful, especially in respect of military coalitions, to ensure that we are dealing with our friends' friends.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Can the House be clear about the exact and precise objective of continued bombing after nine days?

**Mr. Straw:** Yes. If my hon. Friend will wait 30 seconds, he will hear me refer to a document—I am placing it in the Library—that sets out in detail our campaign objectives.

The strategy is clear. It is to ensure that the terrorism that the world saw on 11 September and the capacity to deliver it in future are eliminated. For the benefit of hon. Members, my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence and I are, as I said, today publishing a document that sets out in detail the campaign objectives. In short, acting in self-defence, our aims are to dismantle the terrorists' network; to break the power of those who harbour the terrorists; and to end the threat to security at home. We will achieve those aims by a combination of military, political and humanitarian means.

The military action has been carefully calibrated and every effort has been made to ensure that it is proportionate to the task and within our obligations in international law. All of us in the Government, the House and our armed services would have wished for a different path to the resolution of this terrorist threat. A peaceful and achievable path was laid out very clearly by the President of the United States and our Prime Minister from an early date: an ultimatum to the Taliban regime to hand over Osama bin Laden and his associates and to close down the al-Qaeda network and terrorist camps, and enable us to verify that. That cannot be emphasised frequently enough, and neither can the response of the Taliban. This is a regime that, for years, has ignored international standards of human rights, fairness and respect for innocent life. Then the same people, the Taliban, for whom justice for others means show trials or no trials, brutal imprisonment and summary execution, suddenly demanded the evidence against bin Laden.

As the House knows, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister published the evidence. It was incontrovertible, but just as conclusive have been the damning admissions from the mouths of bin Laden and his associates themselves. How else are we to take their hollow warnings, which have been broadcast on television, that Muslims

"should avoid tall buildings and travelling in planes"?

Bin Laden has killed before; his victims included many Muslims. As his warning shows, he will kill again if left to himself.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): I take it that the document that the Foreign Secretary is placing in the Library is entitled "Defeating International Terrorism: Campaign Objectives." The Prime Minister's press secretary briefed the press about it last Thursday afternoon. Given the huge interest of hon. Members and the wider public, especially in the extent of the military aspect of the campaign, is there any reason for the delay of five days before placing the document in the Library?

**Mr. Straw:** No. It should have been placed there earlier. I am now rectifying the error.

When military action is taken, some say that it is neither necessary nor proportionate and that there is another way. The response of those who hold an alternative view is that we should follow the example of Milosevic and take bin Laden to an international court. My answer is yes; let us follow the example of Milosevic, who now awaits trial before an international court. However, he stands trial not as an alternative to military action but because we took such action.

Milosevic engaged in repression on a massive, brutal scale against tens of thousands of men and women who happened to be Muslims. Like bin Laden, Milosevic was not open to negotiation, pleas of common humanity or United Nations injunctions. He believed that he was impregnable. If the world had not followed the decisive lead of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and agreed to military action, including 78 days of continuous bombing, Milosevic would still be in power, there would be no trial and many tens of thousands of Kosovo Muslims would be dead or living in abject deprivation.

If we will the end, we are obliged to will the means. Bin Laden, like Milosevic and other tyrants before them, has forced us to will the only effective means that we can: targeted, proportionate military action. Without war in the Balkans in the 1990s, we could not have established peace with justice and security there. Again, there will be no peace, justice or security for the people of Afghanistan or the world unless we take military action against the terrorist threat.

There is only one caveat to my comparison with Milosevic. The tribunal for former Yugoslavia, where he faces trial, was established to try cases that no states are able or willing to try in their courts. In the case of bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network, there is a state: the United States of America. Bin Laden committed crimes of mass murder against the USA and its people. He should therefore be tried under US law if he becomes available for trial.

The House must face the reality that bin Laden and his associates will not deliver themselves up. Those who call for him to go on trial are not so much whistling in the wind as evading the clearest and only choice: to indulge and appease bin Laden by doing nothing or to defeat his evil by taking effective military action within a comprehensive political strategy. I know of no other choice.

**Mr. Robert Marshall-Andrews** (Medway): We are repeatedly and rightly told that the events of 11 September constituted a crime against civilisation and the international community. Does the Foreign Secretary not agree that there are enormous advantages to setting up an international court now to draw the indictment and subsequently to try bin Laden in his absence or in his presence, and for it to represent international jurisprudence and include one or two Islamic judges? We could thus send the international community the clearest message that we regard the matter as an international crime to be tried internationally.

**Mr. Straw:** My hon. and learned Friend must face a fact that the House has faced and accepted: the choice is not that easy. I am afraid he must just get used to that brutal truth. There is to be an international criminal court; it is being established; we are in the vanguard of ratifying the treaty. The arrangements will not come into force until 60 nations have ratified the treaty. In any event—as my hon. and learned Friend will know, given his legal learning—under its statutes, the ICC has no retrospective jurisdiction. So no such tribunal exists, or is likely to exist, to try bin Laden. The sooner my hon. and learned Friend, and the few Members who share his view, accept that we are not seeking to evade the clear choice that lies before us, the better: there is no evading that choice.

As my hon. and learned Friend knows, international criminal courts are not a substitute for national jurisdictions, and never have been. They are there to take action against individuals who have committed crimes for which a relevant national jurisdiction will not take action itself. That simply does not apply in this case, or in hundreds of others that we could think of.

When we were faced with terrorist outrages, deaths and conspiracies at the hands of the Provisional IRA, we in the House did not say that we should hand these people over to an international criminal court; we said that we should deal with them here, because their crimes were being committed here. These murders—these acts of mass murder—were committed in the United States, on the terrain of the United States, against the law of the United States. Were bin Laden to offer himself up, it is there, according to the law of the United States, that he should meet his trial.

**David Winnick** (Walsall, North): In view of the charge made against the international community—particularly the United States and Britain—that we are engaged in an anti-Islamic conspiracy and aggression, what justification was there for taking military action in Kosovo? Is it not the case that many, though not all, of those who oppose what is being done now were vehemently opposed to military action in Kosovo? Had that action not been taken, Milosevic would still be in power.

**Mr. Straw:** My hon. Friend has a good and a long memory, and he is entirely correct. I, too, remember sitting here when that military action was taken. I also remember not just that people said we should not take military action in Kosovo to protect the Muslim community there, but that when the action was taking place, my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and my noble Friend Lord Robertson—then Secretary of State for Defence—were told repeatedly, day after day, that it would not work to dislodge Milosevic or to ensure the establishment of a different regime. That was what was said, and those who said it were wrong.

**Mr. George Howarth** (Knowsley, North and Sefton, East): The high-level talks that took place yesterday between my right hon. Friend, our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Chairman Arafat were welcome and significant. On a slightly different subject, however, will my right hon. Friend tell us whether the role played by Afghanistan in the supply and distribution of heroin throughout the world in the recent past is covered in the documents that he intends to publish today, and whether it will figure—as I hope it will—in any long-term solution? Will it be recognised that we need to tackle this evil trade?

**Mr. Straw:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. I shall deal more widely with the middle

*[Mr. Straw]*

east peace process towards the end of my speech, but yesterday's series of meetings with President Arafat of the Palestinian Authority was important.

Yes, one of the many evils perpetrated by the Taliban regime is its sponsorship of the heroin trade, which accounts for 70 per cent. of all heroin produced in the world and for 90 per cent. of heroin on the streets here. It is a state-sponsored trade: the Taliban tax those who produce the heroin to make money for themselves.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (North-East Fife): Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

**Mr. Straw:** I will give way for the last time.

**Mr. Campbell:** When considering the question of jurisdiction, will the Foreign Secretary bear it in mind that after a terrorist atrocity had been committed over Lockerbie we insisted that, although the procedures and form of the court might have been changed, the case should be tried under Scottish jurisdiction?

**Mr. Straw:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman makes an acute point, reinforcing the point that I was making, that democratic states have not only a right but a duty to try people for crimes committed on their territory against either their citizens or those who happen to be there, as with the victims from 60 or so other nations who just happened to be present in the World Trade Centre on the day of the atrocities on 11 September.

I know of no other set of choices lying between appeasement and military action. I have listened carefully to those who have suggested that there is some other way, and I understand why people are uncomfortable about military action—we all are—but I do not understand why, faced with the stark reality of either appeasing the Taliban and allowing them to continue to harbour terrorism, thus wholly thwarting our purpose, or taking military action, they keep dodging those choices.

The international community has not dodged the choices, any more than, happily, have the vast majority of people in this country. Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal have all offered direct military support to the United States, in addition of course to that being provided by the United Kingdom.

The 15 countries of the European Union and the 19 members of NATO have all endorsed military action. As the House knows, historically, for the first time, NATO invoked article 5 of its charter. The United Nations Security Council, in an unanimous resolution on 12 September, expressed its readiness to take "all necessary steps" to defeat this terrorism. The action that is being taken is fully consistent with article 51 of the UN charter.

We are making every effort to avoid civilian casualties in the present conflict by rigorously targeting military and terrorist assets only. We cannot always avoid them, but we are making every effort to do so. There is no moral equivalence between us and our enemy: the terrorists seek to maximise civilian casualties; we seek to minimise them. They want to destroy society in Afghanistan; we want to rebuild it.

**Lynne Jones** (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I remind my right hon. Friend that those who are directly responsible for the atrocities in the United States are all dead. Those who are being pursued are in other countries, and they are responsible for atrocities in other UN states—in Africa, for example—and are clearly intent on terrorising the whole world. Is it not therefore appropriate to set up an international court to try those people and bring them to justice?

**Mr. Straw:** I tried to deal with that point a moment ago. There is only one proposal for an international criminal court, and it is currently awaiting ratification. We cannot magic an international criminal court out of nothing. It will be established in due course. We are among the first to ratify it, but it will not have retrospective jurisdiction, so it could not cover the atrocities of 11 September.

I repeat that it is not only the right but the duty of democratic states to try people for crimes committed in their territory. Had the atrocities occurred in London, Edinburgh, Belfast or Cardiff, rather than the United States, the situation would be exactly the same. Some of those involved in the atrocities are now dead, but many of those who were more widely involved in conspiring and directing the operations are not. Had the crime occurred in this country, the fact that those people are currently in other territories would not in the least have prevented any United Kingdom jurisdiction from seeking their transfer to meet justice here.

Bin Laden and his associates have had every opportunity to give themselves up. They are not going to do so. This is a side issue, a red herring, a way of avoiding a stark political and moral choice that we have to take.

**Mr. Hilton Dawson** (Lancaster and Wyre): In accepting the utter necessity of targeted military intervention at this time, may I ask my right hon. Friend to assure me that all partners in the coalition are giving every possible assistance to humanitarian agencies and efforts to assist the people of Afghanistan?

**Mr. Straw:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support and I can assure him on that point. I was just about the deal with that matter.

**Miss Julie Kirkbride** (Bromsgrove): The Foreign Secretary pointed out, rightly, that a broad range of countries in the coalition are in favour of the action and have offered support. However, there has been some sniping in the media that, so far, this has seemed like a largely American-based operation, with relatively minimal support from other countries; support has come from the UK only. Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that at some time in the future, troops or military aid will be given by other countries so that the coalition looks like a coalition and not like a covert American action under the guise of an international coalition?

**Mr. Straw:** The coalition is an international coalition. We have provided active military involvement from the beginning of the operations. France is now providing military support, while other countries within NATO have offered it. The United States President is grateful for those offers and endorses the position of those countries as members of the military coalition. The extent to which those offers are accepted depends on military decisions

made by the President of the United States. Where they have not been acted on so far, it is not out of a lack of appreciation of the generosity involved but because of the practical ramifications for the time being of the offer.

To pick up on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster and Wyre (Mr. Dawson), the people of Afghanistan have suffered for years from conflict and civil war, often fuelled by the outside world, which has not done nearly enough to help them. The nexus formed by the Taliban regime and the al-Qaeda organisation is only one of a long line of calamities to befall the people of that country. But it should be perfectly clear that we cannot give the people of Afghanistan all the help that they need until the influence of the terrorists is broken.

For years, the international community has tried to deal with the humanitarian crisis. For years, the Taliban regime has been obstructing these efforts. Even now, the Taliban regime is impeding the delivery of humanitarian aid and, astonishingly, trying to tax the food convoys that do get into Afghanistan. That is how much it cares for its people.

We are working with the other donors to relieve the suffering. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development has pledged a further £15 million, on top of the £25 million pledged since 11 September and the £32 million that we have committed to the Afghan crisis since 1997. But only a broad humanitarian coalition can feed and shelter the millions of Afghans who are homeless this winter and who, in most cases, were displaced from their homes long before 11 September.

The appointment of Lakhdar Brahimi, a distinguished international diplomat and statesman, to have overarching authority over these life-saving operations at the United Nations is the clearest possible signal of the importance that we attach to the humanitarian coalition. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I saw Ambassador Brahimi last week, we assured him of our wholehearted commitment to his task.

Relief is the most urgent task, but Ambassador Brahimi has also been given a political responsibility for the longer-term reconstruction of Afghanistan. This, too, is vital to our long-term security and to the fight against terrorism. Even before we embarked on this fight against terrorism, following the 11 September atrocities, Britain was taking a leading role in shaping international thinking on the long-term future of Afghanistan.

Before 11 September, Britain was working with other concerned members of the international community on a vision for the future at, for example, the conference that the UK organised at the request of the UN at Weston Park, a Foreign Office conference centre in Staffordshire, in July. The conference involved representatives from 20 of the nations with the greatest interest in the future of Afghanistan.

In the weeks since the atrocities in the United States, we have worked towards a shared vision with the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and the regional nations involved. Tomorrow, when I attend the European Union General Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg, I shall share those ideas with my fellow Foreign Ministers—as well as in a speech in London next week. A senior Foreign Office official, Robert Cooper, has been appointed to develop our thinking on the future of Afghanistan and to work with the UN and our international partners on building a consensus on the way forward as the situation develops.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): I have a simple point to put to my right hon. Friend, who will be aware of the deep unease in the British population, who know that one does not on the whole deal with terrorism by mass intervention at state level. That action is important and, indeed, there has been no criticism of it as an initial response. The British people will support the intervention as long as it is short and clearly defensible and if they can see an end to it. Before British ground troops are committed to difficult terrain without a clear view of what they are expected to do and what responses they might meet, will my right hon. Friend assure us that he will come back to Parliament and straightforwardly explain to us exactly what the British people will have to accept?

**Mr. Straw:** The British people will support action that is clearly defensible, as they have done so far. I hope that nobody in the United Kingdom believes that the campaign will be short, because no one has suggested that it can be anything but difficult and long. As I said earlier, the campaign cannot be short.

On the issue of ground troops, I assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and the Chief of the Defence Staff have as their principal concern the safety of our forces in all circumstances, recognising the risks that they take. We can never give details of the disposition of our forces in advance, for reasons that are clear and obvious, but I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that ever since the action started, the Government have made every endeavour to come to the House to be held to account for actions that have been taken and to take account of the views of the House, as is our duty. We will continue to do that throughout the campaign.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham): The military action is bound to impede the delivery of aid to those people caught in the humanitarian crisis that is mounting in Afghanistan. How effective has the aid that we have attempted to deliver been? That issue will certainly have an impact on the coalition and how well it holds together, because everyone is concerned about the impact of the action on the people of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Straw:** I have already given figures for how much money has been made available by the United Kingdom, which has been matched by money from other sources. There is no problem finding the money to pay for aid to Afghanistan: the problem arises in getting the aid through. That problem has been caused by the Taliban and not principally by the military action. A regime that taxes trucks as they cross the border has no care for the hunger or deprivation of its inhabitants. We are working as hard as we can to get the humanitarian aid through, but as far as I know no approach has been made by the Taliban to provide safe routes for it. Most of the people who are currently starving were starving and in poverty and desperate need before 11 September, and many of them had fled across the border before that date.

**Mr. David Heath** (Somerton and Frome): The Government have taken great care to ensure that the

*[Mr. David Heath]*

coalition does not appear to be the air force of the Northern Alliance, and that is right. In the event of the Taliban Government collapsing, can the Foreign Secretary give an assurance that the United Kingdom would not recognise an alternative Afghan Government that comprised principally Tajik and Uzbek elements and did not include the majority Pashtun population of Afghanistan, because that could not be stable?

**Mr. Straw:** The hon. Gentleman anticipates my very next sentence.

**Mr. Paul Marsden** (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Straw:** No. I have to make progress.

The world agrees that any future regime in Afghanistan should be broad based and representative of the great diversity of the country's ethnic groupings. The domination of Mullah Omar's faction and the groupings that produced it cannot simply be replaced by another narrow faction, because no regime will be sustainable unless it commands broad consent among those whom it governs.

We have a common objective with the Afghan people—achieving a stable, durable, representative regime that is committed to eradicating terrorism and to enjoying mature relations with its neighbours, and with which we can work on the humanitarian crisis, the drugs trade, human rights and longer-term economic and social development.

In all that, the United Nations will play a key role. I am sure that the whole House will join me in paying a warm tribute to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and his organisation, as worthy winners of the Nobel peace prize. In Afghanistan, they will have yet another opportunity to demonstrate their value to the world. Only the United Nations has the global reach, the instruments and the expertise to help the Afghan people establish the conditions for successful government in Afghanistan. Our task is to make sure that it also has the resources and the political will to make that happen.

Thirty years of war and five years of not existing as a functioning state at all have left Afghanistan with few serviceable institutions. So, as I have said a number of times already this afternoon, we must be prepared for a lengthy commitment. However, no one should be in any doubt about our will to build a better world for the children of Afghanistan. We will not turn our backs on them again.

**Ms Oona King** (Bethnal Green and Bow): I support the action that the Government and the alliance have taken, but I am deeply concerned about how targeted our action is. Reports have just come in that a bomb has hit a Red Cross warehouse containing humanitarian supplies. Can my right hon. Friend give us any assurances that we will be better able to target the strikes that we are undertaking?

**Mr. Straw:** We all share my hon. Friend's concern about the need for accuracy in targeting. I can tell her, because I have witnessed the process, that a huge amount of care is being taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, by those who advise him and provide us with legal advice, and by those who do the same in the United States, to ensure that the targeting is on military and terrorist assets and not on civilian targets. I emphasise that, so far as is possible, civilian casualties and deaths are being avoided. We have had to say from the outset—I am afraid to say that this is a dismal truth of war—that one cannot avoid civilian deaths and casualties altogether when military action is being undertaken, but happily the numbers so far have been low.

I, too, have heard the reports that an International Red Cross centre may have been hit. I understand from a further ICRC report that one person has been injured—the only report of injury or death so far—and that no food or medicine was contained in that depot.

**Mr. Paul Marsden** *rose—*

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) *rose—*

**Mr. Straw:** I am afraid that I must make progress. I have to make two more sets of remarks before I allow others to speak.

The broader objective of our campaign is to eliminate terrorism as a force in international affairs. That involves strengthening domestic legislation and international co-operation against terrorists and their funds. It will involve sustained pressure on those states that aid and abet terrorism. My right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Home Secretary gave the House details of their proposals yesterday.

United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 is the centrepiece of those global efforts. It represents a significant crackdown on those who fund and provide safe havens for terrorists. Britain, as chair of the Security Council committee that oversees the implementation of resolution 1373, will be playing a key role in its success. We are now supported by the broadest possible range of countries—east and west, north and south, Muslim and non-Muslim—in our endeavours.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the most widely representative of the organisations in the Arab and Muslim world, has, in a constructive and helpful statement, reaffirmed its condemnation of the terrorist attacks, and acknowledged the need to take action against the perpetrators.

As so many people of the Muslim faith have said, we are not at war with Islam. Nor are we seeking a clash of civilisations. Islam is part of our civilisation, and Muslims are part of our communities, and a part of what was attacked on 11 September.

Bin Laden seeks to turn the Islamic world against the west. We are, as the whole world is, determined not to let him succeed. The terrorists are the enemies of Islam, just as they are the enemies of everyone everywhere else.

**Mrs. Louise Ellman** (Liverpool, Riverside): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Straw:** I apologise for not doing so, but I must make progress.

We all suffer from the threat of terrorism, and we all have an interest in removing it. The Government and people of Pakistan recognise this overwhelmingly. I praise their courage, and the courage of President Musharraf, in taking a firm stand against terror and supporting this military action.

To pick up a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North and Sefton, East (Mr. Howarth), we have to resolve the conflicts that terrorists exploit for their own ends. At a time when the rest of the world is coming together in the fight against terrorism, the fighting has, sadly, continued in parts of the middle east. Our efforts to secure a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement in that region are therefore more important than ever.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Straw:** I am sorry, I must make progress.

Those efforts were important before 11 September as well. The Mitchell plan has been on the table for months. Resolving the middle east peace process has been a top priority for this country, the United States and the European Union since long before that.

Yesterday the Prime Minister and I discussed the way forward with President Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. Peace between Israel and the Palestinians will come only through a political process that implements "land for peace", delivers security for Israel within recognised borders, brings an end to occupation and leads to a viable, democratic and peaceful Palestinian state. It is time the political will existed on both sides to turn that into a reality, and it is time the men of violence had the wisdom to recognise that a concession which helps secure a lasting peace for the children of the region is not a concession at all but an immense gain.

We all want peace, but sometimes there can be no peace until we have fought for it. I understand—indeed, I share—the fears that military action evokes, but the action that we are taking with our allies is designed to make the world safer, not more dangerous. By far the greater danger would lie in leaving the threat of terrorism unchallenged.

Military action is essential to avert terrorist attacks, but it is not the only part of the fight against terrorism. Terrorism thrives best where conflict, poverty, racism and exploitation have brought about the collapse of government and of civil society. The surest way of defeating these evils is to build a more inclusive world, where the cries of the children of Afghanistan, of Sierra Leone, of Kosovo and of the middle east do not go unheard.

Because it is inspired by this vision, the coalition today is stronger and more focused than ever. It has united countries which once found it hard to see any community of interest.

We are neither deterred nor dismayed by the continuing threat of the terrorists, because we know that we are building a better, safer world, where freedom from fear may at last become a reality for all.

4.19 pm

**Mr. Michael Ancram** (Devizes): I very much welcome today's debate and I thank the Foreign Secretary for his speech. Once again, in these rather strange circumstances, I find myself in agreement with most of it.

It is more than a week since the House last had the chance to consider and deliberate on the events in Afghanistan and their impact on, and implications for, the wider international community. In the past nine days, a large amount of explosive has been dropped on specific targets in Afghanistan. We are told that it has achieved a significant "degrading" of the terrorist facilities of al-Qaeda and of the Taliban Government and their internal communications.

The targeted softening up of the capabilities of the terrorists and their sponsors must be the first phase of the fight to bring them to book. Today, we are told—perhaps we will be told more later—that the airborne assault has become even more targeted.

The Foreign Secretary has set out the reasons behind the present offensive, which we support, but in reporting events there is an innate danger against which we must guard. Constant televised images of smart bombs and pinpoint destruction can give the impression of some distant and disassociated war game in which human life and limb are not involved. Dramatic pictures of bombed ruins claimed by the Taliban to be scenes of mass civilian casualties conversely convey the appearance of indiscriminate attacks on innocent victims.

As so often at times of conflict, the reality lies somewhere in between. It is important that Members deal with the realities and not the distorted images. The grim but inevitable realities and the consequences of any military conflict are that people will get hurt. An even grimmer but no less avoidable reality is that civilian casualties and deaths will occur, however intense the efforts to avoid them. In the attacks of the past week, every attempt has been made to avoid innocent or non-military victims but, as so often is the case in battle, it does not always work. Sometimes when we say that, however, we are accused of callousness or cynicism.

We must never diminish the value or importance of any innocent life lost or any innocent victim injured. We must ensure that everything viable is done to avoid that. At the same time, we must never pretend that such tragic events can be completely prevented. We must always feel enormous grief at civilian casualties and deaths, but at the same time we cannot be deterred from doing what is right. As the Secretary of State pointed out today, the objectives are clear and they justify what is happening.

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned our armed forces, and we join in the tributes that he paid to them. They and their families are very much in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

**Mr. Dalyell:** The right hon. Gentleman asserts that the objectives of bombing are so clear. Could the House hear from him exactly what they are?

**Mr. Ancram:** I am coming to that part of my speech, so I will deal with that matter directly if the hon. Gentleman will allow me a moment.

It is important that every time we debate these issues we remind ourselves of the objectives. I have only just seen the document that the Foreign Secretary laid in the Library. I regret that the House did not get earlier sight of it, as it might have informed this debate. In my brief and hurried reading I discovered that it outlines the objectives at greater length than I intended to do on behalf of the Conservative party.

*[Mr. Ancram]*

I believe that the objectives are, first, to bring Osama bin Laden to justice and to destroy his al-Qaeda organisation. The second is the longer term but equally essential eradication of international terrorism and the very real threats implicit in it. The third is to enable the people of Afghanistan to regain their rights and to live in peace, not least by a determined effort to free them from the threat of famine that confronts so many of them.

The Secretary of State will tell me if those three objectives are in line with those in his document. According to my reading, I believe that he would agree with them.

**Mr. Straw** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Ancram:** I am grateful for that reaffirmation.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, achievement of the objectives will be long and hard. Against continuous propaganda efforts to the contrary, we must constantly reassert that this is not a conflict against people or religions: it is a war against terrorism.

To underline that fact, we must demonstrate that it is not a geographically limited war. We will be robust wherever there is clear or incontrovertible evidence of terrorism or of the sponsorship or sheltering of terrorism. We must be clear that we will be as robust against home-grown terrorism as we will be against terrorism that occurs overseas. It is a complex picture, in which the present military action is essential but is at the same time only one part. Bombing is for the moment crucial; however, in the wider picture it is but the first phase. We need to understand and explore the whole picture.

We support wholeheartedly the Government's efforts to maintain the remarkable international coalition that now supports the fight against terrorism. We have to admire the coming together of powers that historically have regarded each other with at best suspicion and at worst open hostility. How many of us would have thought that in our lifetimes we would see a coalition of interest between Europe, the United States, Russia and China? Yet that is what we have today, and it shows the extraordinary binding effect that the war against terrorism is creating within the international community. Ironically, the suicide pilots who flew those planes into the World Trade Centre, hoping to blow the world apart, have succeeded, uniquely, in bringing it together.

It is important, too, that we understand the sensitivities that challenge that coalition, especially in certain Arab states and in Pakistan and India. I, too, would like to pay tribute to the courage and resolution of General Musharraf in Pakistan, who, despite pressures, has backed the fight against terrorism and who only today has again reaffirmed his country's position as part of the flexible coalition against it.

Sometimes in the past Pakistan has seen our friendship as somewhat short lived. This time, we must show that it is more firmly based, and that we can provide the aid that is so badly needed to help in certain parts of that country.

We must all hear with apprehension news of the renewed conflict in Kashmir. In calling for restraint at this most tense time, we must also be able to reassure our Indian friends that we are no less committed to the fight against the terrorism from which their democracy suffers than we are against the same evil phenomenon everywhere else. Their losses at Srinagar remain fresh in our memories today.

The stability of the coalition, particularly among the Arab states, has inevitably brought the middle east on to centre stage. I had the opportunity on Sunday night—as did the Foreign Secretary yesterday—of meeting Mr. Arafat. I had the chance to talk privately to him and our conservation gave me some cautious cause for hope. We do not need reminding of the crucial role that conflict in the middle east plays in determining the stability of the Arab world as a whole and of the damage to all interests that instability or conflict can cause.

In the current climate, Israelis and Palestinians know, as do we all, that instability in the region can only help the cause of bin Laden. He will seek to provoke instability, either directly or vicariously, and he is undoubtedly seeking to do so. We know that provocation is never easy to resist, particularly in the middle east, but we ask that it is resisted now because to do otherwise is indirectly to do bin Laden's work.

I remember with admiration the Israeli restraint in 1991. We know how hard it was then. They were our friends then and they remain our friends, and we ask for similar restraint now.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York): Is my right hon. Friend aware that broadcasters were summoned to Downing street yesterday to obtain a statement from the Prime Minister's spokesman as to what policy they were to take on the propaganda war, especially on bin Laden's statements and those of al-Qaeda broadcast on the Arab station? Would it not be appropriate for No. 10 to share with the House the advice that was given to broadcasters?

**Mr. Ancram:** My hon. Friend makes a valid point and I hope that, in the winding-up speeches, we may hear some more about the advice given to broadcasters. I have some experience of trying to control broadcasts from my time in Northern Ireland: it does not work. In the age of the internet and satellite television, the efficacy of such control is questionable. I merely say, in a generous spirit, that attempts to do anything about it may prove futile.

We look with hope for a resumption of the dialogue that alone can bring a resolution to the 50-year-old problem of the middle east. With good will at this time, progress can be made, but it has to be a free dialogue, not one brought about by threat or coercion. History teaches us that settlements arrived at in the shadow of war can create problems further down the line. Nor would it be right for progress to be brought about because of the threat of terrorism. In this instance, that would encourage the terrorists. Any settlement must, in the end, be balanced, freely reached and genuinely agreed if it is to have a chance of surviving.

In turn, that must mean that any resumption of the middle east peace process, which will undoubtedly help to maintain the coalition, should be based not on new propositions formulated since 11 September but on areas of agreement previously reached. I believe that revisiting the territory of the inclusive talks at Tabah last January might produce a valuable and useful start.

We should be cautious of the temptation to make bold propositions. Our role must be to encourage both sides to get back around the table and to refrain from conflict.

We could also seek to create a more favourable climate for stability in the area by helping to reverse the economic downturn that the current problems have caused. For example, we could have a useful role to play in encouraging the building of further commercial interests between Israel and her Palestinian neighbours. I should be interested to know whether the Government have considered what encouragement we can give to gas gathering projects off Israel and Gaza, which provide a useful opportunity.

Alongside the maintenance of the coalition and the capture of bin Laden, the objective of seeking stability in Afghanistan must be in the broader picture. It has been ravaged by 20 years of civil and external war. Its people, as we have heard, have been brutalised by the current Taliban regime. Human rights have been jettisoned and untold misery has been caused to the Afghan people. It must now be a clear objective to see the end of the evil Taliban regime. It must equally be an objective to see them replaced by a Government who genuinely represent the whole of Afghanistan and who will be resolute in ensuring that Afghanistan will never again be used as a haven for international terrorism. It must also be an objective finally to bring an end to the civil war in Afghanistan, which has been responsible for so many of the current problems, including the presence of international terrorism there.

A fresh Government cannot just represent one tribal faction against the interests of the rest; they need to represent them all. I welcome the restraint being shown by the Northern Alliance in respect of the taking of Kabul. As Tajiks, most of those in the alliance would never be acceptable on their own to the majority of Afghans. I hope that, in their current military offensive against Mazar-i-Sharif, they will be able to create a bridge to allow further supplies of much-needed food to reach the starving refugees and displaced people in the area—they would win many friends in doing so. The replacement for the Taliban must be broad based. It should be clearly representative of the main strands of interest in Afghanistan. I hope that it would also clearly represent women in Afghanistan, especially after the depredations suffered by Afghan women in these last terrible years.

It is right for us to set out those objectives, but I hope that the Foreign Secretary would agree that it would be wrong for the west, or indeed any external country, to seek to impose a Government on Afghanistan. History shows that that would be counter-productive, but we can help to encourage the political environment in which such a representative Government can not only come into being but flourish. We can encourage the widest consultation in Afghanistan, from which such a Government can emerge. The best conduit for achieving that may be the United Nations.

I should be grateful if the Foreign Secretary or the Secretary of State for Defence would tell the House what discussions, if any, are currently taking place with the UN, specifically on the setting up of consultations from which a representative Government can emerge, and whether they have had any discussions with Lakhdar Brahimi about that matter.

**Mr. Straw:** As I told the House, the Prime Minister and I saw Lakhdar Brahimi last week. In fact, London was the first stop in his international discussions because of the work we in the United Kingdom had done before 11 September in seeking an agenda for the future Afghanistan. The answer is, yes, we did discuss the matters that the right hon. Gentleman mentions, and those discussions continue. I am very happy to ensure that he and the other representatives of the other political parties in the House are properly briefed about those discussions.

**Mr. Ancram:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I would very much welcome that briefing, and I look forward to taking advantage of it.

I am sure that the Foreign Secretary would agree that there is an urgency in this regard. The worst and most dangerous alternative to the Taliban would be a vacuum of power. If the Taliban were in the near future either to split or to implode—both of which I am told are perfectly possible—it is vital that the vacuum is not filled by another faction or Government who will merely reignite civil war, or by a Government beholden to international terrorism. Any stable alternative must share our commitment to the removal of bin Laden and al-Qaeda from Afghanistan. If that joint intent were to become decoupled, our objective of removing bin Laden could become much more difficult and hazardous.

There is also the urgency of the onset of winter. Although I am given to understand that the problems of passage and communication are at their worst in about February, time is not on our side, especially in relation to the humanitarian element, which is the desperate part of the picture. Many of the starving in Afghanistan are in the north and west—areas that will be especially affected by winter.

We have made it clear that the humanitarian crisis is every bit as important as the terrorist threat within Afghanistan. Our commitment, along with that of our allies and the coalition as a whole, to the defeat of terrorism must be matched by a similar commitment to meet and resolve the unfolding human disaster in a real and effective way. If our fight against terrorism is in the cause of freedom and peace, so must be our fight against the scourge of starvation that faces millions within Afghanistan and beyond its borders.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House realise that a massive humanitarian response will be necessary to avert the growing humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan. Although we welcome all the money that the Government have allocated to deal with the crisis, we have to question whether the extent of the aid provided will be sufficient to save those desperate people from disaster.

On the first night of the bombing, United States planes dropped 37,000 rations on Afghanistan. Leaving aside the enormous practical difficulties that bedevil air drops, how can 37,000 rations—each one enough for one person for one day—have an impact on a country where 7.5 million are dependent on food aid each day? We currently manage to get 500 metric tonnes of food into Afghanistan every day in food convoys. The Secretary of State for International Development said that we have to try to double that amount, but even if we were to triple it we would still be 10,000 metric tonnes short every month of the 55,000 tonnes of food that the World Food Programme says is necessary to feed the hungry in Afghanistan.

Oxfam has called the current food aid levels a "drop in the ocean". I want the Government to assure me that every effort will be made to provide adequate provision for

*[Mr. Ancram]*

more than 7 million hungry Afghans before winter sets in. That is the greatest challenge facing the coalition. It is the measure of our humanity in the face of the inhumanity of terrorism.

**Dr. Jenny Tonge** (Richmond Park): I am interested in what the right hon. Gentleman says and entirely agree with him. Does he therefore support the request by Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, for a pause in the bombing to allow substantial aid to go into Afghanistan before the winter?

**Mr. Ancram:** I fear that the hon. Lady is not facing up to the problem that any pause in the bombing would allow the terrorists and the Taliban to regroup from where they have been dispersed to and to rebuild the facilities that have been destroyed. It would prolong and worsen the campaign that is being waged. I say that in all seriousness. We have to understand that that is a fact, and the humanitarian crisis must be dealt with in the light of it.

**Dr. Tonge** *rose—*

**Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East) *rose—*

**Mr. Ancram:** I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

**Dr. Lewis:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that Mary Robinson has retracted the reports that were erroneously issued in which she requested a pause in the bombing? She hoped that aid could be delivered more efficiently and in a way that was more compatible with the necessary campaign.

**Mr. Ancram:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that. Mary Robinson, too, must have seen the dangers of calling for a pause in the middle of a campaign and the effects that that can have on prolonging it.

**Tony Baldry** (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the quickest way of enabling a pause in the bombing is for the Taliban to hand over bin Laden? We should never lose sight of the fact that the first United Nations resolution calling on the Taliban to hand over bin Laden was way back in October 1999, following the bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. There is a great danger of our becoming somewhat morally confused on the issue. All the injuries and difficulties of feeding people in Afghanistan have been caused by the Taliban's refusal to comply with their commitments and obligations under the UN charter.

**Mr. Ancram:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding the House of that; he is absolutely right to do so. I reiterate what the Foreign Secretary said: many of the problems in delivering aid are being caused by the deliberate activities of the Taliban. In the end, it will be the removal of the Taliban Government in Afghanistan that will unlock and open many of the doors that we face in that regard. However, we must be certain that enough is being done. I do not have that certainty at this time, and would welcome the Government's firmest assurances on the matter.

**Dr. Tonge:** The right hon. Gentleman is generous in giving way again and in his calls for the Government to increase aid to Afghanistan, but if we are not to stop the bombing, even temporarily, how does he suggest we get that aid into the country?

**Mr. Ancram:** I made one suggestion about the north of Afghanistan, where the Northern Alliance is opening an offensive against Mazar-i-Sharif. If that is successful, it will, I hope, enable trade routes to be opened for aid to enter that part of Afghanistan. That is another example of how in the end the issue can be resolved only by removal of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Once that is done, the problems that we currently face will be very much reduced.

**Mr. Hugo Swire** (East Devon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as well as stepping up our aid programme to refugees in Afghanistan, it is equally important to step up the aid to Afghans who are already in Pakistan? Some of the surroundings in which they find themselves in the camps are woeful to say the least, and they have lived like that for many years. We could do a lot worse than to ensure that we better look after the Afghan people—for obvious reasons, in Pakistan as well.

**Mr. Ancram:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. My hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State for International Development has made that point on many occasions and, indeed, asked for assurances of adequate and proper standards in the camps. We are all concerned to hear reports that that may not be so, and obviously we want to continue to put pressure on the authorities in Pakistan to ensure that the problem is met. When I talked about Pakistan earlier, I hope that I indicated that I thought it was proper that aid was made available in order to help in areas where such problems occur.

The coalition must be sustained in its task. That task is not without risk. As the Foreign Secretary said, we must be on our guard. At the end of the day, terror is simply about creating fear. Terrorists succeed when people do what they would not normally do because of terror. We must never allow terror to divert us from the undertaking on which we are engaged, or to allow it to distract us from our normal ways of life. No fight can be undertaken without risk. We know the risks, and in light of them we have given our full backing to the Government and the United States of America. So long as their determination to eradicate international terrorism remains undiminished, and so long as their commitment to relieve the humanitarian crisis remains to the fore, we will continue to back them. What is being done is right. I once again offer the Government our support.

4.44 pm

**Mr. Doug Henderson** (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Government, in partnership with other coalition countries, face taking the most grave decisions that any British Government have faced on the international front for a very long time. The House of Commons will have to face up to supporting or not supporting the decisions that the Government make independently or with other countries. That is evidenced by the fact that, for the first time in the institution's 40 years of existence, NATO has invoked article 5: NATO countries have for the first time said that they will come to the aid of another NATO country that has been attacked.

I would find it difficult to say anything that might endanger a strategy that will ensure our future security or that is dependent on the actions of our troops. Even if I thought that I was right, I would be extremely wary of saying anything that might endanger troops who were carrying out the desires of the Government and of Parliament. I believe in proportionate action; I also believe that we must ensure that any action we take is effective; however, I do not believe that we Members of Parliament should remain mute or refrain from making observations that we believe are germane to the achievement of international security and stability, or that address the issue of international terrorism.

I shall focus first on current military actions, then offer some observations on some options that I believe the international coalition is considering taking in future. I understand why military strikes are necessary if a course of action using ground troops is to be attempted in future. We cannot endanger helicopters, aeroplanes or people that might be involved in some future project, so perhaps some military installations in Afghanistan should be taken out by military action. Where a need to do that can be demonstrated—I know that Ministers are extremely anxious to ensure that it can—I have no reservations about such action. If we decide that the right strategy is to intervene on the ground in Afghanistan, we must do all that we can to make it as safe as possible for whoever represents our interests.

Although I understand the need to take military action, I am concerned about some of the actions that television and newspaper reports reveal have been taken. When I see pictures of an airfield in Afghanistan where 14 Russian Mig fighters are lined up on the runway with a civilian aeroplane at the end of the runway presenting a target for our military action, I begin to think that the Taliban, for some reason, want us to carry out military strikes.

I know only a little about such matters, but no military commander in his right senses who was in so serious a position would line up his fighting capacity on an airfield, ready to be attacked by an enemy that had already declared its intention to attack. Any strategist would disperse those aeroplanes by any means possible—even hide them under haystacks—rather than line them up at an aerodrome. If a force had 10,000 Mig fighters, it might have nowhere else to put some of them and be forced to put them on that runway, but no one who had only a limited number of fighters would line them up in that way. That scene suggests to me that either those fighters were inoperable and useless, or that they were of some use but for political reasons the Taliban wanted television screens around the world to show their destruction.

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** Is my hon. Friend aware that some military analysts have identified some of those aeroplanes as having been around since 1988? They are of no use at all, so when we declare that they are wonderful targets that we have managed to blow up, we miss the whole point. In fact, we are dropping bombs and blowing up kids, and it should stop now.

**Mr. Henderson:** I hear my hon. Friend. I have explained my position; I am not against military action, but it should be effective. Initially, a military purpose should be pursued consistent with a political purpose. Questions are now being asked. According to reports in *The New York Times*, the American Defence Secretary himself has been crying out for another strategy that would develop the coalition action from the form it has taken over the past nine or 10 days into something different. He has expressed what many of us are expressing; we want some military action, but it must have a purpose. If that purpose is achieved, the action should stop. I know that it is difficult for Ministers to respond on such an issue, but the public are asking those questions, so it is right for Parliament to debate the matter. Ministers must demonstrate that the action is necessary and is leading to something else.

**Mr. Marsha Singh** (Bradford, West): My hon. Friend spoke about the need for action to be precise and when it should stop. Does he accept that the House has heard about the coalition and how it is supported by the Muslim world? In reality, popular Muslim sentiment throughout this country and the world is against the bombing. The longer that it continues, the more unstable certain regimes in the world and our own British Muslim population will become. Incidentally, the British Muslim population should be highly praised because the majority has remained calm, although extremely perturbed. However, the longer the action goes on, especially the bombing, the more dangerous the world situation gets, especially in Muslim countries.

**Mr. Henderson:** I hear my hon. Friend and agree with a lot of what he said. I shall come on to that and shall try to keep my remarks as short as possible.

If we had a dilemma in deciding our initial action, we have a critical dilemma in trying to decide where we go from here. Essentially, there are two options. The coalition can say that there is only one way to deal with the problem; continue the bombing, perhaps extend it to other countries, send in ground troops, root out the Taliban regime and, if necessary, undertake a military campaign to achieve that. Military experts would recognise that that would take many months, if not years.

To try to ensure any degree of safety for our troops, we may estimate that we have to outnumber the other troops by a ratio of three or four to one, although military strategists will argue about the precise numbers. If the Taliban have 100,000 people prepared to fight, we need 400,000. If they have 200,000, we need 800,000; everyone can do their own calculations. If we went down that road, we would have to be prepared to face up to the issues raised by that strategy and their implications for public opinion in this country, Muslim opinion worldwide and the Governments and people of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Malaysia. If we took that route, it could lead to the huge consequence of our eventually creating a 21st century Vietnam.

It is all very well removing the Taliban Government under that strategy. What would be the next step? How would another Government be created in Afghanistan, and where would they come from? How would they establish any kind of law and order? If the United Nations had to establish a protectorate—that is an attractive idea—how would it be kept in power? Who would provide law and order and external security?

Those are difficult questions and reservations have already been expressed about handing over a position to the Northern Alliance to allow it to try to fill the vacuum. That would be an unacceptable solution.

*[Mr. Henderson]*

The problem is that if one enters the arena on the basis of backing forces that begin to struggle or are removed from power, one has a choice: to desert them and allow further anarchy, or to be trapped for a very long time, as the Americans were in Vietnam, before it is possible to extract military force and hand over power to a civilian Government. There is a genuine danger of such circumstances arising in Afghanistan.

The House may have gathered that I have grave doubts about a so-called all-out ground war. Even if bin Laden were apprehended and brought to justice by such an approach, would not the downside—the effect on the rest of the Muslim world—outweigh the benefits? Such an outcome might even encourage new bin Ladens to appear, day in, day out, not only elsewhere, but here in Britain. Serious questions must be asked about such an approach. I know that debates are occurring in the United States and inside the Government. I hope that the Government, who recognise the dangers, will acknowledge that there are hon. Members who are not afraid of taking military action or supporting a long-term campaign, but who would back them in holding such discussions. That applies internally, in relation to the British Cabinet, and externally, in terms of dealing with coalition partners.

We are all equally outraged about the atrocities that occurred in New York. The realistic option is to explain to the public that the campaign against terrorism cannot be waged in the short term or by ordering massive troop incursions. People here and elsewhere will ask why, if it is so easy, we have not solved the problem in Northern Ireland.

We must take a much longer-term view and be prepared to use stealth. The time to strike is when the terrorist is not awaiting action and does not expect to be apprehended and brought to justice, or eliminated if such an outcome is not possible. We would, however, have to prepare public opinion for the adoption of such an approach and tell people not to expect quick results. If we are extremely lucky, we may achieve such results with bin Laden, but in the light of the probabilities that are suggested by intelligence information, that seems unlikely. We should not be saying that the problem can be dealt with quickly. Our actions must be sustained for a long period and we must carry with us international and domestic opinion, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Medway (Mr. Marshall-Andrews) pointed out.

4.58 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (North-East Fife): The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) was right to draw our attention to the potential pitfalls of a massive ground operation of the sort that he described. The fairly recent experience of the Soviet Union would lend corroboration to the points that he made. I do not understand, however, that such an operation is being contemplated by Her Majesty's Government. I believe that they would be equally seized of precisely those elements of such an operation that would be so difficult and dangerous to accomplish.

I found a great deal with which to agree in the speeches of the Foreign Secretary and the shadow Foreign Secretary. Despite our directly relevant and recent experience in the Gulf war and Bosnia and Kosovo, there are still some people—I suspect that their number is decreasing in the House—who cling to those two enduring myths that apply to modern military action, especially when it is taken from the air: that it guarantees the achievement of quick results, and that it can be executed without civilian casualties.

If the mood of the House has been sombre in the past, today it seems that it needs to be sober. As has been made clear in previous contributions, we are concerned not so much with the rhetoric of our outrage—or, indeed, the eloquence of our sorrow—but with the reason that is necessary for coping with the circumstances in which we now find ourselves.

The campaign is only nine days old, but its success will never be measured by conventional means—the number of missions flown or targets struck—because we are not dealing with a conventional enemy. There will be no conventional surrender, and it may be long after the campaign before we know the point at which a successful and terminal blow was struck. We must curb our impatience and hope that our example will curb that of the laptop generals of Fleet street.

We must recognise our moral obligation to provide maximum humanitarian assistance. Our moral authority for military action will be severely undermined if we do not fulfil our moral obligation to provide humanitarian relief. I have heard those who argue for a pause in the bombing. Whether Mary Robinson said one thing or another is not relevant; the fact that the issue was raised means that we should apply our minds to it.

If the bombing stopped, I do not believe that the Taliban would open all the entrances to Afghanistan, wave the aid through and say, "This is the support and assistance of an international community, fulfilling its humanitarian obligations under the auspices of the United Nations." I wish I could be confident that that would happen, leaving aside the propaganda advantage that would be taken of a pause and the question whether pausing would prejudice the overall military objectives.

There is no moral equivalence between the operations against the Taliban and the events of 11 September. It is disingenuous to argue otherwise. Unintended civilian casualties in Afghanistan do not alter the fact that the events of 11 September were conceived in cold blood, planned with skill and executed with deliberation and no regard for the consequences. By contrast, minimising civilian casualties in Afghanistan is a specific operational requirement of the current military action.

It is an unpalatable fact that any military action, however targeted and proportionate to need, runs the risk of civilian casualties. We have been seduced too often by videos; no bomb, however smart, is infallible. I do not want any civilian to die or be injured in Afghanistan, just as I did not want thousands to die in New York or Washington. However, it is not possible to guarantee that none will.

We must also bear it in mind that military action is not an end in itself, but a means of achieving political objectives. Mine are couched in slightly different language from those of the shadow Foreign Secretary, the Foreign Secretary or those with which the Prime Minister began his statement 10 days ago. They are: bring Osama bin Laden to justice; fracture the terrorist network over which he presides; try to remove the threat of terrorism wherever we find it in the world, and allow the people of Afghanistan a Government of their choosing.

I do not believe that the final objective needs to await the achievement of others. As the shadow Foreign Secretary said, it is essential to avoid a political vacuum when the Taliban fall; otherwise, the Northern Alliance may replace an odious regime with one that many people in Afghanistan would find equally distasteful. We should therefore identify a clear role for the United Nations in rebuilding the nation. There is no better time to do it than, as the Foreign Secretary reminded us, in the week when Kofi Annan and his organisation have been awarded the Nobel prize.

We should make it clear that our purpose is to install a Government chosen by the people, not Washington or any other capital. If we do that, we shall assist in maintaining the coalition to which hon. Members have already referred. We should not underestimate its fragility. That is why I applaud the Prime Minister's initiative in relation to the middle east, because it is important in itself—I have argued that case in the House on many occasions—but also because of it influence on the coalition.

It is clear that the events of 11 September were not designed to achieve a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. The objective was to loosen, or even remove, United States military and political support for the ruling family in Saudi Arabia, to try to make their replacement by a more fundamentalist regime much easier. The fate of those poor Palestinians in the Shatila camp in Beirut, which many Members have seen, is no concern of those who turned aircraft into flying bombs and flew them into buildings in the United States.

Even if there had been a peaceful settlement in the middle east, the attacks would almost certainly have taken place, and even if there were a settlement tomorrow, it would not prevent other such attacks. The lack of a settlement, however, is an important factor in Arab capitals throughout the middle east, which we ignore at our peril. It is an issue not just among Governments but, perhaps more particularly, in the streets, where there is sincere—sometimes bordering on the hysterical—support for the Palestinian cause.

Let me suggest a formula: we must make progress on the Palestinian issue, and be seen to do so. Action, not articles, will be more persuasive. In doing so, we must help as far as we can to check the fervour of support in the streets. That in turn will assist the Governments and Arab capitals to give more support to our coalition; but it must be based on Israel's right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries, free from threats and acts of force.

If those last few words sound familiar, they will sound familiar to those who have most recently read resolution 242 of the United Nations Security Council, of 22 November 1967. Some 34 years later, it could be argued that they are even more relevant today.

It appears from his meetings with the shadow Foreign Secretary, with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary—and, indeed, from the meetings that my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal Democrats and I had with him—that President Arafat clearly recognises that there is an opportunity, perhaps a better opportunity than there has been for some time. He must have been encouraged by the recognition in Washington that the Palestinians must have justice and, as the Prime Minister put it, a viable Palestinian state. A certain ironical smile must have crossed the face of the Foreign Secretary when he heard the Prime Minister use that language: he may have thought that his immediate experience of the middle east had been, if not brushed away, certainly pushed to one side.

Let me remind the House of what I sometimes call the theory of raised expectations. If we do say that there is a better opportunity—if we do say that there is a demand, a requirement, a necessity for something to be done about the middle east peace process, even if only for the pragmatic purpose of securing the coalition, and then fail to do anything about it: if we raise expectations and then dash them—the position will be very much worse afterwards than it was before.

Finally, let me say something about the widening of military action. The last time we debated this issue, I said that I thought there was quite a bit of loose talk, particularly about Iraq. I think we would be well advised to get the military action in which we are currently engaged right, before talking about extending it to other countries. We should also understand—the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) perhaps knows this better than any other Member—that there is great sympathy throughout the middle east not for Saddam Hussein but for the people of Iraq, given their privations and suffering over the last 12 years. Any extension of military action against Iraq without clear and specific evidence would, in my judgment, rupture the coalition.

Equally alarming is the possibility that Saddam Hussein, repeating the provocations of the Gulf war, when he targeted Israel with missiles, would seek to draw Israel into conflict. The most sanguine of us must have some apprehension at even the remote possibility of a missile exchange between a nuclear power, Israel, and a regime hellbent on achieving capability in weapons of mass destruction, as Iraq is.

There is a further compelling reason against an extension of military action without clear and unequivocal evidence: it is precisely what bin Laden wants. If we turn this into a conflict between Christian and Islamic countries, we play precisely into his hands. We could not hand him a better propaganda weapon.

These are difficult and even dangerous days, requiring cool heads and determination. Those qualities are at a premium. Because we recognise them in the Government, they have our support.

5.11 pm

**Linda Perham** (Ilford, North): On 11 September, I was in my office in Portcullis House when my husband rang me to say that his head of department had just called him out of his classroom to ask him in which city in the United States our 20-year-old daughter was studying, because he had heard that two planes had flown into the World Trade Centre and that the Pentagon had been hit. I remember saying to him, "Well, of course, she's on the west coast, so she's not affected", and then putting the phone down, thinking that the whole thing was completely unbelievable. Then someone came into the office and said, "Put on the television—this thing is really happening." That shows my reaction of disbelief.

My other daughter is 22, the same age as the youngest British victim of the atrocities, Vincent Wells, born on 17 September 1978. I went to his memorial service last Sunday, which 600 people attended. He worked for Cantor Fitzgerald on the top floor of the World Trade

*[Linda Perham]*

Centre north tower, so he had absolutely no chance of getting away. He was a football fan who both played and watched, and he was one of three people with Redbridge connections in the World Trade Centre that day.

Michael Cunningham, who was 39 and a former pupil of the same Catholic school as Vincent Wells, was working for Eurobrokers on the 84th floor of the south tower. He was the father of a three-week-old baby and had just returned a couple of weeks before to work in New York again.

Richard Duncan, who was 54, was the father of a son of 19 and a daughter of 14. He was a former local hockey and cricket player who had celebrated his silver wedding anniversary a month before the tragedy. He was working for the US firm Aon on the 99th floor of the south tower.

My local community is mourning those three hard-working and enterprising men, ranging in age from my daughter's age to my own. They were part of an area of London that has, in general, seen a peaceful move to a multicultural community over the years. My constituency has one of the largest Jewish populations in western Europe, but also now has an increasing number of people of other faiths and none, from south Asia, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as people from Greece, Turkey, China and many other countries.

On 12 September, on the advice of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, my local borough commander called a meeting of groups representing the local community, the council, Redbridge Refugee Forum, Redbridge Racial Equality Council, the Jewish Community Trust, the League of British Muslims and others. Not long after that, a statement was issued bearing the names of many organisations and individuals, including all four borough Members of Parliament—including the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith)—local council leaders and many organisations. The statement read:

"We, the representatives and leaders of different political, ethnic and religious groups in the London borough of Redbridge, are united in our condemnation of the murder and mayhem inflicted on human beings in America. We join together to extend our sincere condolences to those who are suffering as a result of the terrible events inflicted on them during Tuesday, September 11 2001.

In our borough, people from many diverse communities live side by side in a way which is largely harmonious and secure. Although differences of opinion are freely expressed, mutual respect and a will to live peacefully side by side creates a local way of life that we can all be proud of.

Times as testing as these unite people in ways which may not have been possible before. We have the opportunity to see each other differently. It is our hope that the enormity of this crisis leads to a legacy of peace for the future."

These are testing times indeed, and there are opportunities to unite. I join my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and the right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) in paying tribute to our armed forces. This time last year, I—along with the hon. Member for Vale of York (Miss McIntosh) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Rachel Squire)—was on HMS Cumberland in the Arabian sea, travelling from Bahrain to Kuwait. I would recommend that experience to other hon. Members, who would learn what our armed forces have to go through and the training that they receive.

I want to emphasise the importance of talking as well as acting in such a crisis. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, Colin Powell and others have gone around the world building alliances and maintaining the international coalition against terrorism and for humanitarian support for Afghanistan and other poor countries in the world.

For my sins, when I entered this House I quickly became involved with groups seeking settlements in Cyprus and the middle east and I visited Cyprus and Israel. Those who took part in the delegations talked to all sorts of people on different sides of communities and from different political parties, as well as human rights workers and academics. When we went to Israel in 1998, we were told that there was an opportunity to meet Yasser Arafat. Before and after we met him, there were those who wondered whether the Labour Friends of Israel group should meet Yasser Arafat. However, we felt that it was important to talk to him yesterday—as other right hon. and hon. Members have done during his visit—to get another side of the argument. We cannot rely on hearing only one side.

Talking and acting together to tackle international terrorism and to fight world poverty is the best thing that could be done. Some good may come out of those dreadful acts if the global community can join together to confront those twin evils. If so, the twin towers will not have been vaporised in vain and our three local lost sons will have a worthy memorial.

5.19 pm

**Mr. Francis Maude** (Horsham): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Ilford, North (Linda Perham), who has made a valuable point that sometimes escapes attention—what happened on 11 September was not just an attack on America and Americans; we could not find another two buildings in the world that contained a greater variety of people of different nationalities, faiths and backgrounds. It remains the case that more Britons died in that attack than have died in any single terrorist attack on mainland Britain. When we say that the attack was not just on America but on us all, it is a literal truth, and the hon. Lady did a service to the House by reminding us of that.

It is right that a debate on a matter of such gravity should not follow a pattern of slavish adherence to a consensus viewpoint. That would be a negation of the democracy and values for which we are fighting. It is proper and desirable that Members of Parliament should use the opportunity of such a debate to question whether military action is necessary, whether it is proportionate and whether it is likely to be effective. We should not suggest that those who ask such questions should be condemned as unpatriotic or cowardly, because that would be wrong. We should have a proper debate, because that is what a democracy stands for. It is proper to question the propriety of what our Government and others, especially that of the United States, have embarked upon.

On the question whether the military action is necessary, several hon. Members have suggested that it is not. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), whom I greatly respect, is not in her place, because she suggested that people could tolerate short-term action but that they would not have an appetite for longer-term action. She compared the current action with what was done in Kosovo some two years ago. With respect, that is a false comparison. There was much questioning of what was done in Kosovo. My party

rightly supported the action that was taken, but widespread concern was expressed about whether British forces should be engaged in such action. That was for the simple reason that no direct British interest was involved, although we had plenty of indirect interests.

The current action is different. What happened on 11 September was on a different scale of gravity and immensity from anything that we have seen before. I was in New York 10 days ago and I visited the site of the World Trade Centre. We have all seen the television pictures and read the stories, but when one sees—and, frankly, smells and tastes—the devastation that was wrought on that day, one understands that what happened was of a different magnitude to anything of that nature that has happened before.

Is military action necessary? Yes. The hon. and learned Member for Medway (Mr. Marshall-Andrews) talked earlier of the desirability of parallel action in the international court to bring an indictment against bin Laden and he was chided by the Foreign Secretary for suggesting that as an alternative to military action. However, I do not think that the hon. and learned Gentleman was saying that. He was making the point that it would look politically more attractive to the wider world, especially those sceptical about what is being done, if we went through the motions—if I can put it that way—of criminal proceedings against someone whom we all believe, with good reason, to have been responsible for what was done, although the Foreign Secretary was right to say that no international tribunal exists today that could undertake that activity.

**Mr. Marshall-Andrews:** What the Foreign Secretary said on that was completely misconceived. Of course there is not an International Criminal Court, although we have been trying to establish one for a long time. However, two international criminal courts, now sitting at the Hague and Arusha, were set up by the United Nations Security Council to act retrospectively under article 29 of the UN charter. I think that the Foreign Secretary knew and understood that it was precisely such a court to which I was referring.

**Mr. Maude:** That is a perfectly fair point. There is no doubt that it would be legally and physically possible to establish a court that would have retrospective jurisdiction, just as the international criminal tribunal for the Balkans has had. However, the Foreign Secretary makes a good point. I confess to being a sceptic about the International Criminal Court. I doubt whether it would be effective and I think that there are some dangers involved in setting it up.

The terms of the statute that establishes the International Criminal Court do not permit criminal proceedings to be brought against someone who is accused of war crimes unless there is no national court that is able or willing to bring proceedings against him. However, the Foreign Secretary rightly said that the national legal system in the United States has jurisdiction in this matter and that that country is very willing indeed to bring proceedings. Establishing an international tribunal is therefore not really a practical possibility. However, the Foreign Secretary's point is a fair one—that it is not a question of taking military action for the sake of military action—and it is important that that point is widely conveyed. I have no doubt that military action is necessary. There is no practical alternative. If it is necessary, it has to be pursued with utter relentlessness and with an absolute determination to make it effective.

That brings me to the question of whether what is being done is proportionate. In previous debates, when Parliament was recalled last month and earlier this month, a number of hon. Members expressed surprise that the Administration in Washington were so measured in the way in which they responded, with no instant fireworks and no knee-jerk, immediate sending-off of cruise missiles. That none of that happened should not have been a surprise to those who know the members of that Administration. They are very serious, experienced people, who would not have had any sympathy for the kind of gesture politics that might have been involved in instant reaction, but who have a completely steely determination to ensure that the terrorism that inflicted such brutal damage on so many tens of thousands of lives is rooted out.

Is the response proportionate? Yes, I think that it is. What was done on 11 September was an act of enormous scale, savagery and immensity, so a proportionate response to that is one that is savage and relentless and which has to be made effective. We should have no doubt about that.

**Mr. Harold Best** (Leeds, North-West): I was interested in what the right hon. Gentleman said about proportionality and about rooting out those who are alleged to be responsible for the offences that have taken place. No one in this House or anywhere in this country would dispute that those events were horrendous, but they raise serious questions about when a policing action—with such force as is necessary for the arrest of the perpetrators of the crime—differs from the force that is being used right now. That force is being described—quite accurately, it seems to me—as war, and is a qualitatively different process. Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on those differences?

**Mr. Maude:** Indeed I shall. We should not try to persuade ourselves that what is going on is a process analogous to sending for the constable to apprehend the villain and sit on his head until help arrives. That is not what is going on here, because we are not operating in a law-abiding environment where there is help of that sort to hand. A widespread criminal gang or network is being harboured in a state that gives it active support and receives active support from it.

The only way to exterminate or eradicate the source of that evil and terrorism is to take military action, and that is being done. We cannot send in the international constables to clap handcuffs on people and feel their collars. Military action must be taken. We all know that the chances of bin Laden being led away by the scruff of his neck are not high. The chances are that he will be killed in the military action, and that is probably a pretty good thing.

The analogy with law enforcement is confusing. Terrible harm is being done and all of us—here, in America and elsewhere—live in daily fear that further great damage will be done. It has to be stopped. Whatever needs be done should be done, and I hope that it will attract widespread support. The point was made by the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife

*[Mr. Maude]*

(Mr. Campbell) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) that even in a modern conflict, with modern weapons and all the artistry and science that is available, war cannot be conducted with such pinpoint accuracy that civilians do not get hurt. The politicians involved, the military commanders and those flying the planes take the utmost care to ensure that civilians are as safe as possible. Equally, we must accept that civilians cannot be absolutely safe and that some will be hurt and killed in the process. We must hope that the numbers will be minimal.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The right hon. Gentleman calls for effective military action to bring the terrorists to book. The whole House would agree that there should be effective military action. However, for military action to be effective it has to be sustainable. The Americans had to withdraw from Vietnam not because they could not out-gun the Vietnamese, but because their action was not sustainable in the face of world opinion. How long does the right hon. Gentleman think that world opinion, especially in Muslim countries from Nigeria to the middle east, will support the inevitable rising civilian death toll in Afghanistan?

**Mr. Maude:** I want to come later to that important point, which the hon. Lady is right to raise.

We all accept that the utmost care will be taken to protect civilian lives, but they cannot be completely protected. However, to tailor military action to such an extent that no civilians were ever put at risk would make it ineffective. That would be wrong. Nothing could be better calculated to erode public support in the west—and more widely—than the sense that the action was unnecessarily protracted and becoming ineffective. The more effective the action is the quicker it can be taken and the less difficulty there will be in sustaining public support. I accept that public support outside the west is not nearly as extensive as we would like.

The building of the coalition has been crucial. Many right hon. and hon. Members have spoken about that. I commend the Government, and the Prime Minister in particular, for the part that they have played, with America, in assembling the coalition. It is crucial that it continues to be sustained. The Prime Minister's role has been important, and it illustrates what some of us have been saying for some time—that although Britain has not been a superpower for many decades, we can none the less exercise influence and make a big difference by dint of who and what we are, what we have been and what we can be. We do not have to be a pale shadow of the United States, nor do we have to allow our diplomatic effect to be subsumed within a European Union common foreign policy.

The Prime Minister and the Government are rightly illustrating daily the fallacy that some people seem to believe—that because we are no longer a superpower and cannot pretend to do everything, we cannot do anything. Britain can do and is doing a great deal and I am delighted. It has played a great role in assembling and sustaining the coalition.

I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Miss Kirkbride) said when she intervened on the Foreign Secretary to point out that it would be helpful if other European coalition partners were taking a more visible part in the military action. The right hon. Gentleman properly said that these are military decisions that must be left with military commanders; military demands must be paramount. However, to make this look and feel less like a unilateral United States action, a more visible deployment of a wide array of international military assets would be helpful. I hope that the Government understand that point.

In assembling the coalition, it is right that an opportunity has been taken to take steps on the crucial issue of middle east peace—the Israel-Palestine issue. The Prime Minister was right to take the opportunity to progress that. Again, Britain can make a serious difference. We will never have the clout of the United States in the middle east, but that does not mean that we can do nothing. Britain has credibility with Israel. We have rightly been a long-time supporter of its right to exist in safety and security. At the same time, we have ancient links and friendships with much of the Arab world which enable us to play an intermediary, facilitating role in the promotion of peace. The British Government should be heavily engaged in that process. The coalition has not only to be built but to be sustained. No one would claim that the propaganda battle has been won outside the west and it must continue.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Singh) pointed out in an intervention that many Muslims inside and outside Britain deeply oppose the military action. That is an observable fact. However, we should not just accept it, say that it is difficult and leave it at that. That is where political leadership comes in. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members who have some influence with the Muslim community here will use all their powers of persuasion to make the case that what was done on 11 September was a defamation of Islam. The present action is not in any sense opposed to Islam. The events of 11 September and the fact that they were done in the name of Islam were as damaging as it was possible for them to be to public perception of Islam.

That propaganda battle is by no means won—perhaps it has not even been properly embarked upon. All political leaders should do all that they can inside the country and beyond to make the case that this action is not about Islam.

**Mr. Salmond:** The right hon. Gentleman misunderstands the nature of the problem as regards Muslim opinion. The problem for the great majority of Islamic opinion is not what happened on 11 September, which overwhelmingly Muslims condemn as an atrocity; it is much more with the action to bring to book terrorists, which involves the bombing—as it seems to the Muslim population—of an entire country. That is the argument that has to be engaged.

**Mr. Maude:** That comes back to my first question: is this military action necessary? Most people in the House and beyond believe that there is simply no other way to bring to book those who committed and organised that act and to ensure that they cannot repeat it. That is the case that has to be made. The Foreign Secretary put it starkly. He said that there is a choice between appeasement and military action. He seemed to fight shy of saying that there is no third way, but I think that is what he was really trying to say. That is the point that must be got across.

It is part of what I mean when I say that political leaders have to make the case for what is being done. That will be crucial. Pakistan is central to that. Of course, there must be enormous sensitivity about the position of the Pakistani Government and great support should be given to General Musharraf, who has behaved with enormous courage—personal and political. He deserves great support for that.

I mildly counsel the Government against being too categoric in saying that the military action should never be extended beyond Afghanistan. Of course, we still cannot be certain that the anthrax attacks emanate from al-Qaeda, although there is inevitably a strong suspicion that that is the case. No one has suggested that al-Qaeda itself has the capability for such manufacture. It is well understood that Iraq has the capability to manufacture such evil products, so there must be a suspicion. No one suggests that one embarks on military action against a country such as Iraq on suspicion; that would be absurd. However, it would be unwise for the Government to rule out at this stage the possibility that further action may be necessary.

**Mr. George Galloway** (Glasgow, Kelvin): I ask a simple question: is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the anthrax bought by the Iraqi regime in the 1980s was sold to it by companies in the United States of America?

**Mr. Maude:** That may well be the case. I have no knowledge of that so I cannot argue about it. However, that does not alter the fact that we know that Iraq has such a capability, which it has been developing for overtly aggressive reasons. Given the links that we know exist between al-Qaeda and the Iraqi regime, there must be a suspicion that that is the provenance of the anthrax germs used in various attacks. It thus seems wrong at this stage, without being intemperate or precipitate, to exclude as a matter of dogma the possibility that military action could go beyond Afghanistan.

I close with a reflection on the domestic effects. Yesterday, we heard statements from two senior Ministers who made proposals for urgent legislative action. Much of what was said was persuasive. The case being made for particular new provisions is well understood and, on the face of things, it is hard to argue with it. However, Ministers should be aware that Whitehall is riddled with desks whose drawers contain numerous schemes for more regulation, more intervention and more interference with people's lives, which will tend always to alter that crucial balance in the relationship between the citizen and the state.

We should be aware that those schemes—perfectly properly thought up and developed—are always awaiting a political opportunity for their deployment. We should be aware of the "something must be done" syndrome, which is too often operative in politics. The Government of whom I was a member were as guilty of that as any. Something comes up, we want to show that we are doing something and new legislation and regulation seem an easy answer. However, that is rarely the answer, so I counsel the Government to exercise great caution in the schemes for new regulation and new intervention that they propose, and I urge the House to scrutinise any legislation with very great care.

We are not being pettifogging or difficult, but such legislation will affect the balance of power between the citizen and the state, and if the House exists for anything, it is to protect that balance. We are asking our military forces to go into action to defend democracy, civilised values and the rule of law—all of which were set at nought by the wicked people who set in train the events of 11 September. We honour the memory of those who were killed in those dreadful atrocities if we exercise our functions as a democratic, legislative Chamber as properly and fully as we can.

**Mr. Dalyell:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should like you to draw to the Speaker's attention the fact that no Minister from the Ministry of Defence is present, even though a Minister from that Department will be responsible for making the winding-up speech. Irrespective of whether hon. Members agree or disagree with the right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude), he has just made a thoughtful speech, and it should at least be reflected on by the Minister who will make the winding-up speech. I ask you to raise this issue with Mr. Speaker, because the House of Commons is in danger of talking to thin air. Frankly, the Secretary of State for Defence made the winding-up speech in last Monday's debate, and to anyone who heard the speech, as I did, or read the report of it, it was only too clear that the Government were not listening to what had been said in the House. Not only is that bad manners, but it is a pity, as there is a great deal more knowledge and sense among those on the Back Benches than among those on the Front Benches.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal):** That is not a point of order, but I will ensure that Mr. Speaker is made aware of the hon. Gentleman's comments. Does the Minister wish to comment?

**The Minister for Europe (Peter Hain):** I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for that invitation. I will certainly pass on my hon. Friend's comments. I am making a note of the points that are made. Indeed, I have described the speech made by the right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude) as thoughtful in my notes—precisely the point that my hon. Friend makes.

5.47 pm

**Mr. Andrew Dismore** (Hendon): I wish to address the concerns that many of my constituents, not least those from the Muslim community, have raised with me about the activities of the fundamentalist extremists in London who have sinister international links and provide support, aid and comfort to the Taliban and bin Laden. I first raised those concerns in parliamentary questions in January and May last year, and I am pleased that some action at least has been taken in respect of several of those involved, but others remain at large.

I shall begin with Sakina Security Services, which was raided a couple of weeks ago. Sakina is an Islamist security organisation with extremely close links to al-Muhajiroun and Supporters of Sharia. Sakina sends people overseas for jihad training with live arms and ammunition. It is hostile to the British Government, police and security services, and regularly issues threats to British interests in the United Kingdom and overseas. It is also particularly anti-semitic and appears to have singled out the Jewish community as its direct adversary.

In October 2000, Sakina launched an appeal for donations to the Al Aqsa Liberation Fund to raise money to support the Palestinian jihad. The bank account was

*[Mr. Andrew Dismore]*

held with the Woolwich and was also used to solicit donations for the Taliban. I am pleased to say that that bank account has now been closed. Sakina also had a website on which it advertised training courses, the most impressive—if that is the right word—of which was called "The Ultimate Jihad Challenge". Sakina advertised a two-week course in the United States and emphasised practical live-fire training, using 2,000 to 3,000 rounds of mixed-calibre ammunition. The website said that students would be taught,

"live fire engaging multiple targets; live fire concealed carry; combat jungle run; live fire sniper; live fire shooting at, through and from vehicles"

and many other terrorist skills.

Sakina also organises training in many different sites in the United Kingdom. However, its activities are not limited to that. A bulletin board posted on its website a year ago today claimed that Sakina operatives were in

"occupied Palestine, sisterly Lebanon and in Jordan"

ready to fight in the Palestinian jihad. Although the police have acted, I regret that the Department of Trade and Industry has done nothing to close the company. So far, only one Sakina associate, Sulayman Bilal Zain-ul Abidin—also known as Frank Etim—has been arrested and charged with offences under the Terrorism Act 2000.

The al-Muhajiroun organisation is inextricably linked with Sakina. It was founded by Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed who was given indefinite leave to remain in the UK in 1993. It is also linked to Supporters of Sharia, founded by Abu Hamza who was given UK nationality in 1986. Al-Muhajiroun is dedicated to establishing a Muslim state in Britain. Bakri is openly contemptuous of Britain and the very idea of democracy. He told the *Daily Mail* on 17 September,

"My job is to speak about Islam. I don't agree with manmade laws. In Britain I engage in opposition to manmade laws and expose the weaknesses of manmade laws. I don't believe in democracy or dictatorship, they are both manmade. They are the two faces of the same coin."

For years al-Muhajiroun has been engaged in training and recruiting young Muslims and is now banned from university campuses. It has engaged in fundraising for terrorist causes, including Hamas and Hezbollah, and has organised violent demonstrations against the Jewish community and the United States. Some of its supporters have been jailed for violent attacks.

In an interview with the Arabic newspaper *al-Sharq al-Aswat*, Bakri Mohammed boasted that al-Muhajiroun sent Muslim youths on jihad training courses in Virginia, Michigan and the Missouri desert where they learned various techniques for guerrilla warfare, for making explosives and using shoulder-mounted missiles. He stated that between 300 and 400 people were sent on such courses each year, travelling as Europeans on British, French and German passports so that they did not need entry visas for the United States although most were of Asian or Arab origin. The training was organised by a British security firm that is managed by a Muhajiroun member. I believe that to be Sakina Security Services and the Muhajiroun member to be Mohammed Jameel.

In the same article, Bakri Mohammed said that financial contributions to cover the costs were regarded as a grant that the youths had to pay back after their return by working part time in the Muhajiroun's jihad and call networks which recruit Muslim youths to prepare them militarily. He was asked to name the countries that the youths went to and said that after completing military training

"some went to Kashmir, and others to Chechnya and to Kosovo before that. Some remained in Britain because they were not fully trained ideologically."

More recently, on 21 September, Bakri told supporters outside the Pakistan High Commission that his brother had left to fight in Afghanistan. He said:

"Like me he has received training in Texas and in the north of Scotland where he undertook a one-year course in weapons and evasive vehicle manoeuvring."

On 30 September Omar Bakri Mohammed told activists in Birmingham that they

"had an obligation to help and support Afghanistan and to fight with them."

An additional close link is provided through Mohammed Jameel, one of the organisers of Sakina. He is still at large and has made speeches at many al-Muhajiroun public meetings at which he has been billed as

"co-ordinator of Sakina Security and member of al-Muhajiroun."

In an article for *Al-Wassat*, another Arabic newspaper, entitled, "Yes, we have camps for the training of the mujahidin", Jameel revealed that Sakina has trained more than 150 youths. He also revealed that it trains Supporters of Sharia members at the Finsbury Park mosque. In the same article, Bakri Mohammed revealed that young men had been sent to camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Abu Yaya is another operative of Sakina. On 26 June 2000 he gave an interview on the "Today" programme on Radio 4 in which he explained that he had just returned from Kashmir having spent four months on military training where he learned everything necessary, including making bombs, using artillery and a Kalashnikov and how to mount an ambush. He cropped up after 11 September as a spokesperson for al-Muhajiroun. On 24 September he said that he had

"a divine obligation to join his brothers and sisters. My allegiance is to Islam, not to Queen or country—if I have to shoot British soldiers, then so be it . . . There is no law in the UK that can stop us going. I have already had military training, I know the area and I am ready to return to Afghanistan."

There are many similar quotes from other al-Muhajiroun activists. Omar Brooks, speaking to a newspaper on 16 September, said:

"There are a sizeable number of Moslems undergoing military training in the UK . . . If America decides to bomb Afghanistan, then we'll wake up. If they're going to attack Afghanistan then what's my duty? It's going to be a new chapter."

Zahir Khan told a meeting in Birmingham on 17 September:

"If Britain helped attack Afghanistan, it would be allowable for Moslems to attack military targets in Britain."

Shah Jalal Hussain, another al-Muhajiroun activist, spoke on 19 December of how he and many of his friends who are British Muslims believe that Whitehall and Downing street are "legitimate targets" if Britain helps the US in any strike. Those are not simply the words of hotheads. Those people have had serious military training and they pose a threat that must be taken seriously.

Abu Hamza al-Masri is widely known as one of the people behind the Finsbury Park mosque. In 1997 he ran *Al-Ansar*, an Arabic newspaper that supported the

Algerian Armed Islamic Group—GIA. The newspaper was originally established by Rachid Ramda, an Algerian who arrived in the UK in 1992 and is accused by France of organising and funding a series of terrorist bombings in France in 1995. He is still fighting his extradition to France.

Abu Hamza closed *Al-Ansar* in 1997 and in its place launched the Supporters of Sharia, another serious organisation. In 1999, eight British Muslims were convicted in Yemen of plotting terrorist attacks. The Yemenis accused Abu Hamza of organising the plot in conjunction with Islamic terrorists in Yemen. Abu Hamza also often acts as a mouthpiece for Yemen's main Islamic terrorist organisation, the Aden Abyan Islamic Army. When it kidnapped a group of tourists in 1998 its leader decided to announce the news first to Abu Hamza, whom he telephoned.

Recent reports reveal that Ahmed Beghal was a regular attender at the Finsbury Park mosque. He is the leader of a terrorist cell of Takfir wal-Hijra which planned terrorist attacks in Europe, including a suicide bombing of the US embassy in Paris. Beghal lived in London during the late 1990s and was part of a clique of Takfir wal-Hijra supporters, who are still active at the mosque. In July this year he was arrested in Dubai.

Abu Hamza has used his position at the mosque to promote a message of violent and radical extremism. In two speeches at mosques in Burnley, which were broadcast in the "Dispatches" programme on Channel 4, he said:

"Get training . . . What are you training for? So you can get the kufr"—

the non-believer—

"and crush his head in your arms, so you can wring his throat, so you can rip his intestines out . . . Forget wasting a bullet on them—cut them in half . . . if you could put a balaclava on your face and walk down the road and stick one on somebody then do it. As long as you're going to get away with it."

He has incited people to attack Jewish causes, with which he identifies the "Zionists of the west", America and Britain. He incites, provokes and propagates hatred and the killing of the enemies of Islam.

In October 2000 Supporters of Sharia, al-Muhajiroun and the Islamic Observation Centre, led by the Egyptian terrorist Yasser al-Sirri, held a demonstration outside the Egyptian embassy. Abu Hamza implored his supporters to donate money

"to somebody who you know will use it to blow up these Jews, to blow up these Israelis".

Abu Hamza has his own theory about what happened on 11 September. He does not accept that the twin towers were demolished by aircraft: he believes that it was a Zionist plot and that the towers had been stuffed full of explosives. That might be laughable, but his comments have to be taken seriously. It may not be a coincidence that on Saturday night before last the Finsbury Park synagogue was virtually destroyed in an arson attack.

Yasser al-Sirri is wanted by Egypt because of a car bomb that killed a 12-year-old girl and injured scores of her classmates eight years ago. It was recently revealed that he is implicated in the recent suicide bomb murder of the Afghan opposition leader by helping two assassins posing as journalists to obtain Afghan visas. I believe that he is still at large.

Abu Qatada is another person about whom we need to be extremely concerned. The US Treasury has recently named him as one of those whose assets have been frozen there, yet he remains at large in the UK. Abu Qatada, whose full name is Omar Mahmood Abu Omar, is a Palestinian-Jordanian who is closely associated with Jaish Mohammed, a proscribed organisation. In September 2000, he was convicted in his absence in Jordan for the millennium bomb plot. He is a close associate of Omar Bakri Mohammed and Abu Hamza al-Masri, and ran what was known as the Baker street mosque in Marylebone from a youth club, the Four Feathers club, which I believe recently moved to another address in the Harrow Road. One attendee of the youth club was shot dead at an Islamic school in Yemen.

Qatada has built a reputation for spreading extremism and division in the Muslim community in this country. In Brighton, he led a group of radicals who unseated the moderate imam of the mosque there. He has been to both Afghanistan and Bosnia, and been highly involved in many activities. Zacarias Moussaoui, the suspected 20th hijacker, regularly attended the Baker street mosque run by Abu Qatada, who has twice been convicted for his role in terrorist attacks in Jordan.

Surely it is time to take action against such extremists. The Crown Prosecution Service and the Director of Public Prosecutions have not adopted as aggressive an approach as they should have in dealing with these individuals. However, our laws must not permit companies, organisations or individuals to be used as fronts for terrorist fundraising or money laundering. We cannot permit the continuing organisation of package tours for trainee terrorists, on which they learn to kill with modern weapons and tactics. We must prevent the sending of youngsters to every troublespot around the world, where their lives are at risk or they threaten the lives of others, including British service personnel.

I am pleased that our race hate laws are to be strengthened to include religion, but in protecting our Muslim communities, that review must also deal with the incitement to violence and conspiracies of the extremists. There can be little doubt about what al-Muhajiroun, Supporters of Sharia, Bakri Mohammed, Abu Hamza and the rest are up to. They are bin Laden's fellow travellers. We must proscribe their organisations under the terrorism legislation.

As we review our asylum and immigration law, we must not just speed up extradition but respond to those who seek extradition of people such as Abu Qatada. The Home Secretary's powers to revoke indefinite leave to remain must be clarified and strengthened. It should be extended to the revocation of recently granted UK citizenship, so that those who abuse our democratic system and actively seek to destroy the society that protects them from the regimes that they would themselves impose on others can be removed if it is conducive to the public good and their own security to do so. We cannot allow the human rights of everyone else to be threatened any longer by such extremists.

6.2 pm

**Mr. David Tredinnick** (Bosworth): I apologise to both Front-Bench teams for being unable to be present for the winding-up speeches owing to a prior private engagement.

I was in New York last week; I got back on Sunday. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude), who might have been the shadow Foreign

*[Mr. David Tredinnick]*

Secretary but for one vote, I experienced the very strange atmosphere in the city, especially the strange smell which once experienced is never forgotten. I add to that the sound at night of empty and loaded trucks carrying masses of rubble and remains from the city. To grasp the scale of the catastrophe, we must remember that only one fifth of the rubble has been removed and that those trucks will be rolling for at least a year. That is a staggering thought.

One lesson of the conflict is that we must not alter our lives for terrorism. I say that having had some experience serving in Northern Ireland at the start of the troubles. The Government should try to persuade us to maintain our life styles wherever possible. When we change them, we give in to the terrorism and give the terrorists what they want. Maintaining our life styles may not be possible in all circumstances, but there has been much panic and it is unnecessary.

Let us consider that, since the troubles in Northern Ireland began in 1969, terrorism has claimed 3,000 lives—very few on the mainland—yet every year there are between 1,600 and 1,900 accidents involving buses and pedestrians in Britain. So, the chances of being hit by a bus are infinitely greater than being involved in a terrorist incident. The Government should try to stress that.

I was at the NBC studio on Sunday when the issue of anthrax was discussed. Indeed, I met someone who had been in contact with the gentleman who had been diagnosed as having contracted it. I spoke to some of the medical specialists present. They stressed that cases of anthrax had been quite common among textile workers in America. I represent what used to be a textile constituency—we have lost so many factories—but we have never had a case of anthrax in Hinckley. The medical specialists stressed two points: first, that one should not take an antibiotic if one has not contracted the disease, and secondly, that the medicines for treating it are potent and effective. We must try to avoid being frightened to death, which is exactly what the terrorists want.

Another impression from the United States was the worry—it was present in the United Kingdom last week, too—about public relations, how we are carrying our cause and whether we are effective. We have made one glaring error in talking about crusades. Such talk was probably instinctive for those of a particular religion, but it was unfortunate.

This morning I was talking to somebody who is very close to a broadcaster on an Islamic radio station in Britain about the mistake of linking the words "Islamic" and "terrorism". We are dealing not with Islamic terrorism but with terrorism that is perpetrated by a very small proportion of a particular community. We must not talk about "Islamic terrorism", which tends to bring the whole of Islam into the matter.

We have heard the eloquent comments of colleagues such as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) about the concerns that we all feel over the loss of civilian life in Afghanistan. My right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham highlighted the difficulty of conducting military campaigns without the loss of civilian life. However, the Government must keep pointing out that what happened on the site of the World Trade Centre, which is now called Ground Zero, was the worst single civilian massacre in living memory. There was no military target. The massacre included victims from the Greek, Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities; every religion was represented in that catastrophe.

We must at times take very determined action against terrorists. Such action had to be taken against Colonel Gaddafi, and we did not hear much from him afterwards. We had to take tough action in the Gulf. I was then secretary of the Conservative Back-Bench foreign affairs and defence committees. We were a little wobbly at times; we felt very concerned about what was going on. It was not pleasant. The situation in Bosnia has been mentioned. How would we have brought Mr. Milosevic to book had we not taken action? What awful ramifications would there have been for Macedonia and the whole theatre if we had not acted?

We must not just wield a big stick but carefully consider the carrots. I say that sincerely. We must get across in a much more concise and understandable way what the west intends to do to help not the rich countries in the theatre but some of the poorer ones. We need to come up with a few phrases that catch on, such as "Aid to Arabia" and to get across the fact that we are concerned about the nations in the area, that there is a western plan measurably to improve the standard of living, and that that is an integral part of our strategy.

America's history of war and reconstruction provides telling evidence of the two processes going hand in hand. The last great shock to strike America before the catastrophe occurred at the World Trade Centre was Pearl Harbour. The Americans talk all the time about that shock attack by the Japanese, and there was great hatred in the United States for the behaviour of the Japanese during the second world war. However, at the end of that war, General MacArthur went to Japan not to demand the emperor's head, but to reconstruct Japan. Why do the Japanese now love playing golf? Why do they wear American baseball caps? Why do they play in the American baseball league? It is because they could not comprehend the United State's kindness in coming to their defeated nation and reconstructing it.

Other examples include the Marshall plan in Europe and the reconstruction of the southern confederacy after the civil war. The book that President Bush is currently reading is "April 1865", which is about events in the month preceding the conclusion of the American civil war. It tells of the reconstruction planning and attempts to find a solution that would ensure stability in the south. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Defence is thinking as a doctor and wondering how we can treat the patient—although we might have to adopt a rather tougher approach than he takes in his surgery.

**Mr. Salmond:** He is a psychiatrist.

**Mr. Tredinnick:** I had better not take up the opportunity that that comment provides, lest I be called to order.

In the emergency debate a couple of weeks ago, I stated my belief that what we needed was a United Nations solution for Afghanistan. I believe that even more strongly now, especially when I consider that if the Northern Alliance take Kabul, it will be extremely hard to get rid of them. Think about what happened in Berlin at the end

of 1945: the Russians surged across the lands of the Third Reich and did not hand control of Berlin to the four powers until they had thoroughly sanitised and bugged it. It took lengthy negotiations before our forces got to Berlin, which made matters extremely difficult.

We have to look beyond Afghanistan. Many hon. Members have spoken eloquently about the problems that confront us in that theatre, and I do not propose to repeat their remarks. I think that there is a momentum toward change in many places, and when drawing up a settlement after the war in Afghanistan ends—however it ends—we should include other troubled areas. Pressure should be exerted to resolve the Kashmir conflict, and to end the troubles in Sierra Leone. We have an opportunity to change our relationship with Iran, which was once our staunchest ally in that region. However many Chieftain tanks Iran bought from the United Kingdom, they are still there. In the old days, Iran was a great trading partner for us. There is work to be done, but great opportunities to change things for the better arise out of tragedy.

In all our debates, we hear about Israel and Palestine—whatever we are supposed to call it. I know that the Government got into some difficulties with descriptions of Palestine. I met Yasser Arafat many years ago in Tunis, when he was still classified as a terrorist. Like the hon. Member for Ilford, North (Linda Perham), I thought that that was an important mission that we had to undertake if we were to build bridges.

Currently, there are two fundamental problems in the region that must be resolved. The first problem is the settlements. It has caused problems throughout the Arab world. I checked the figure in the Library: there are 200,000 settlers in approximately 150 settlements and according to current reports settlements are still being built in contravention of existing arrangements. Another problem, left over from the Yom Kippur war, is that there are 607,000 registered refugees in the west bank and 852,000 in Gaza—displaced Arab people who have never found a home. Those two problems form a double powder keg in the region. Having visited the region, I think that the settlements have to be stopped. Peace will never be possible unless that happens.

I strongly believe that the greater the disaster, the greater is the potential for good. Now is the time for the Government—whom I commend on their handling of much of the crisis—and the United States Administration and all brave men to stand up and try to resolve as many of the conflicts in the world as we can. That might sound rather grandiose, but it is something to bear in mind, even though we are faced with an extremely difficult struggle. We have one ghastly statistic in common with the former Soviet Union: we both lost about 16,000 men in Afghanistan. That region will never be an easy theatre—

**Patrick Mercer** (Newark) *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Tredinnick:** I see my hon. Friend, who is a distinguished soldier, nodding. We will probably not be able to achieve our aims simply by dropping matériel from the air. However, with God's help, we will prevail.

6.16 pm

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): To be frank, in 39 years I have never heard so much cosy self-delusion as has been uttered by those on the Front Benches during this debate. What on earth do we mean by "carefully calibrated reactions"? The truth is that there will be massacres of civilians and that these events will go on and on.

We talk about "effective military action". What on earth is effective about dropping bombs from 30,000 ft, trying to attack the heartland of bin Laden, which is almost certainly tunnels, at high altitude? It is sheer cant to pretend that after nine days we are involved in effective military action.

The Foreign Secretary tells us that there is no alternative, but there is an alternative: it is to do something on the intelligence front, to follow every lead in the background to the atrocity. Some of us simply do not believe that the atrocities against Manhattan and the Pentagon were in any way honed or finalised in some cave in Afghanistan. The truth is that they were honed and finalised much nearer home—in western Europe, in Hamburg, Harburg, London and Leicester, and in the United States itself. What is being done to follow up the leads to those who were actually involved in committing the crimes?

We are told by the Secretary of State for International Development that the Law Officers are asked to give approval every time there is a targeting. I want to know whether that is a fact. No answer has yet been given by way of parliamentary question. Are the Law Officers consulted on every target? Do the Americans consult us? I should like the Minister who winds up the debate to tell us whether we are consulted or not.

I believe in short speeches, and many hon. Members want to speak. I have made the points that I think are relevant.

6.19 pm

**Dr. Jenny Tonge** (Richmond Park): The Foreign Secretary made many comparisons between the action against Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden and the action in Kosovo, which I supported at the time it was being carried out. It strikes me, however, that there are two glaring differences: first, in Kosovo we knew the enemy—we knew who was in charge and where he was—and, secondly, there were not 7.5 million people on the point of starvation before the action started.

When this all started two weeks ago, we were promised a three-pronged approach, including military action delivering justice, not revenge, through proportionate action. I certainly agree with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), as I assumed that that action was going to be mainly intelligence work to find out what was going on behind the scenes, and that it would not be indiscriminate.

We were promised diplomatic action, which continues and in which the Prime Minister has played a great part, but we were also promised humanitarian action, on which I shall speak later. Military action has now gone on for 10 days. We were told by an American general that there are few military targets left, but the psychopath Osama bin Laden and his gangs are still at large.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Does the hon. Lady agree that bin Laden and his gang will be simply delighted by the bombing? They foresaw the trouble that would be stirred up in Pakistan and the great difficulty that would be created in Saudi Arabia. Might it not be that bin Laden's object is

*[Mr. Dalyell]*

to stir up such trouble in Saudi Arabia that the house of Saud falls and, according his own perception, be it realistic or not, he can return to Saudi Arabia, as Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran?

**Dr. Tonge:** I agree entirely. I was going on to say that bin Laden is still at large and that the fragile coalition, which has been painstakingly crafted by the Prime Minister, is showing signs of strain. That is precisely what bin Laden wanted.

The Taliban may eventually crumble and have to be replaced by another—we hope, better—Government. I have always worried and wondered—this is genuine and I hope that the Minister will address it—whether that will affect bin Laden and his gangs. Will he not just go somewhere else? I suspect that he has always ruled the Taliban, rather than be controlled by them, evil and horrible a Government though they are. When the Taliban are gone, Afghanistan is destroyed and bin Laden and his gangs are still at large, who do we bomb, and what will the Muslim world think of us? What is the future?

My other main concern is the humanitarian action promised after 11 September, which so far has been quite inadequate; continued bombing is making the humanitarian situation far worse. We know that transport, particularly road transport, is fundamental to the humanitarian effort, yet experience in other recent conflicts such as Bosnia and Kosovo suggests that high-level bombing can often lead to the destruction of transport infrastructure. The risk of that happening is higher if the conflict in Afghanistan is extensive and prolonged. Indeed, one cannot rule out the possibility of those under threat deliberately destroying key transport infrastructure themselves, making it even more difficult and perhaps impossible to provide and distribute food and essential non-food resources to those in need.

In his winding-up speech, will the Minister address the Foreign Secretary's suggestion that charges are being made on aid convoys going in and out of Afghanistan? If that is true and convoys are getting there—we understand that 500 tonnes of food are getting in every day—who is paying for the trucks? Is that why the Secretary of State for International Development announced a £15 million increase in aid? Is it to pay for trucks? If we are not paying, what is happening to the trucks? May we have a little more detail to make sure that that is not just a story that is going around?

Whatever people think, Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, definitely said:

"Are we going to preside over deaths from starvation of hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of people this winter, because we didn't use the window of opportunity before winter closes?"

That window is getting smaller and smaller; four weeks, probably, are left to deliver aid. By contrast, the UK's Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, now says that

"we must expect to go through the winter and into next summer at the very least".

Does he mean that we will be bombing all that time, and, if he does, what on earth are we going to bomb?

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (South Staffordshire): Will the hon. Lady clarify one point? Is she speaking for her party or entirely as a Back Bencher? We have heard a different line from her right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell). It would be interesting to know whether she is given free rein to speak as she wishes or whether she is speaking as her party spokesman.

**Dr. Tonge:** I am speaking as my party's spokesman on international development, and about all the factors that are affecting the delivery of humanitarian aid.

**Mr. Simon Thomas** (Ceredigion): Whether or not the hon. Lady is speaking officially for her party, she is speaking for many in the House.

**Dr. Tonge:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention.

The aid agencies tell us that the only effective way to address the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, with its hilly terrain, is to bring in necessary food and non-food items by road, and to administer that using people familiar with local needs, conditions and customs. That must be done now, before winter comes.

The right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) pointed out the mammoth task ahead: 120,000 tonnes of food is needed, which breaks down to 343 trucks a day taking in 3,430 tonnes of food. At the moment, 500 tonnes are going in; I do not know how many trucks that represents. All I know is that it means an awful lot of people are going to die. Unless action is stepped up, famine will be upon Afghanistan in the winter.

Some people have accused me of being unhappy about the Americans dropping food parcels, having originally said that we should bomb Afghanistan with food and aid. However, the food parcels dropped alongside the bombs are extremely dangerous and are an insignificant way of providing aid. Not only do they drop into fields where there are land mines—local people can be blown up trying to retrieve them—but they are unsuitable provisions that are no good for Afghan people to eat. Moreover, they link aid with bombing, which is very dangerous indeed for the aid agencies, as they have repeatedly pointed out to the international community.

I still do not rule out the possibility that there may have to be some form of air lift over the winter to bring food and aid to the Afghan people. I do not see how we will get essential aid there if we do not do that.

A successful humanitarian approach has three critical ingredients: transport, security and speed. The opening up of the road system while it exists is necessary, as is the guaranteeing not only of a safe passage for those trucks bringing in essential supplies but the safety of those monitoring needs and overseeing the distribution of food and non-food items—a difficult procedure. With winter fast approaching, speed is of the essence if we are to avoid the catastrophic consequences of inaction.

The situation is desperate. We must ensure that the international community puts the needs of millions of innocent people in Afghanistan first and creates the conditions whereby all those people in need receive sufficient aid. As international development spokesperson for my party, I feel that we must call for a pause in the widespread military action in Afghanistan so that aid channels to all those in need can reopen in the few

remaining weeks before winter. If we do not, we not only condemn hundreds of thousands to death by starvation but endanger the coalition against terrorism.

6.30 pm

**Mr. Bob Blizzard** (Waveney): I was in the United States on 11 September, and I want to begin by taking us back to the atrocities, because it seems that several weeks later the magnitude of the disaster has begun to diminish in many minds and in the press, where we are now seeing pictures of what is happening in Afghanistan. I witnessed the horrific events of 11 September and their aftermath live on the US media, which are a bit different from our own. Over the next 10 days, I talked about what happened as I continued to travel around meeting American people. Thus, I felt that I shared their experience, even though, thankfully, I did not experience close up the suffering of New York and Washington.

For obvious reasons, I could not return to the House on 14 September, but I watched events in the Chamber live on American public broadcasting at—I think—2.30 am mountain time. The House was solemn and very moved, but a number of contributions of all types made it clear that it was very difficult for people in this country to feel the same sense of outrage as was felt in the United States. That was made even clearer when I returned home. I found some media reports very offensive, especially the anti-American streak that was evident at that time.

The events have now become known simply as 11 September, and that is what we all call them. I am concerned lest that term should become another example of the classic British understatement with which we always use the terms "Falklands conflict", as if what occurred was not a war, and "the troubles in Northern Ireland", as if what is happening there is of minor importance. In the United States, what happened was unanimously and spontaneously called an attack on America. That is what it was—an act of war. I suppose that using that term in this country would have made the events seem remote and not especially relevant, but we now know that it could have been us on 11 September. We know that attacks were being planned at the same time in a number of European countries and targeted on European Union institutions. What occurred was an attack on us all. I repeat what has been said so often: it was an attack on our basic freedom and on our democracy and economy. Worryingly, that attack is continuing.

We should not ignore the targets and the symbolic importance of the Pentagon and the towers of the World Trade Centre. I call what happened an attack on our whole way of life. We witnessed a level of terrorism that was unprecedented and that had previously been unthinkable. Sadly, it made me reflect that we had got used to some acts of terrorism, such as the hijacking of planes. Executives who travel around the world are given guidance by their companies on what to do in the event of hijack. That is why so many of the passengers on the first three planes sat still, thinking that they were going to be taken somewhere else. It was only on the fourth plane, when they learned through mobile phones about what was in store, that they tried to resist. We have become used to the planting of bombs in city centres. We are not even surprised any more when aeroplanes are blown up, as happened over Lockerbie.

It was sad that we had come to tolerate terrorism before 11 September, but we must remember that turning civil aircraft into flying bombs four at a time and slamming them into buildings is co-ordinated warfare. That is why we must adopt a response to terrorism that is different from that which we have used previously. Surely, we are not going to become used to flying-bomb aircraft attacks on buildings or germ warfare.

We know that what happened was not the act of individual fanatics, but the deadly deed of a terrorist organisation whose network covers the world. We now know that it is principally based in Afghanistan. That is why I do not see how we can possibly pursue the sort of judicial, Lockerbie-style approach of conducting a criminal investigation and lengthy extradition procedures, and then putting two or three people on trial about 10 years later. That is not a sufficient response and it would be unrealistic to expect the American people and their Government to accept it as a way forward. We would not accept such a response if the attack had been made here.

The scale, sophistication and depth of the terrorist organisation that inflicted disaster on America had never before been fully appreciated. Certain targets must be destroyed by military means. Some people say such means will not work, but they are advocating the do nothing option. If we did nothing, terrorists would laugh at our inaction, which would go down in history as another form of appeasement.

Other people ask what can be done and how terrorism can best be tackled. Some of them say that it is impossible to defeat it. The suggestion that nothing should be done because any action is difficult makes us feel as though we are facing the mythical creature whose teeth came alive when it died. However, there is a time for us to stand up and do something, and I believe that now is that time.

I mentioned the anti-Americanism that pervaded much of the debate about what happened. I find such an attitude especially difficult to understand at this time. We know that the target was not only the United States, but the whole of the so-called western world—a world that is now diverse. We are not all white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. When one travels around America, one sees that it is an incredibly diverse country. It was born out of people who were seeking refuge and asylum, and it has continued to develop along those lines throughout its history. Those who were responsible for 11 September used the freedom of America to enter the country and sign up at flying schools. They used all the freedoms of that country to construct their plot, which is very difficult to understand.

Some people were concerned that the Americans would respond in a stereotypical way and recklessly blow up half the world. They have shown themselves to be better than that. I believe that their approach has been patient and calculated. Let us not forget that this was not the first attack. Two horrific attacks were made on embassies abroad. They targeted not rich, western capitalists, but poor people in Africa. Previous attacks were also made on the World Trade Centre and the American warship USS Cole. In addition, various other attacks on America were headed off at an early stage.

We know where anti-Americanism comes from. I was opposed to America's actions in Vietnam and I still do not agree with what it did, but let us not forget something else about American history and foreign policy: America supported us in our time of need during the second world war. Last week, I heard a radio programme—I think that it was broadcast on BBC Radio 5 Live—whose topic was

*[Mr. Bob Blizzard]*

whether this was our war and whether the action had anything to do with us. We should thank America for not taking such a line in the second world war.

Some people place great emphasis on tackling the problem by dealing with the underlying causes of terrorism. Of course we must pursue that approach, which is what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was doing yesterday, and we all wish him the best in that respect, but before suggesting that that is all that we should do we must bear in mind the people with whom we are dealing. The only way in which we could stop al-Qaeda by such means would be to give it absolutely everything it wanted, which would merely encourage groups around the world to make demands on the basis of violence and to stop only if every single demand were met. Even then, they would probably think up more demands at the last moment.

Some people are so fanatical that, to them, terrorism is almost an end in itself. That is shown by groups such as the Real IRA. Earlier, it was said that if the Palestinian problem were solved tomorrow, al-Qaeda would continue its work. I share that view because that organisation comprises a bunch of people who hate the world in which they live. They believe that they can purify it by killing people throughout it, not only in the United States and Europe. In their countries, they kill people of their own religion whom they do not deem sufficiently pure.

The Taliban regime is the modern form of Nazism. I read that, in the Taliban's Afghanistan, people from minorities are told to wear armbands; women are treated despicably, and the regime even take it out on Buddhist statues. I therefore make no distinction between the Taliban and bin Laden's organisation: one represents the home front; the other, the foreign legion. We should not forget that more people have suffered death in Afghanistan at the hands of the Taliban than died in Washington and New York on 11 September.

Afghanistan was not always like that. The Afghan people are not evil. Some years ago, I spent several weeks in Afghanistan, and I know that they are a proud and decent people, but they entered a dark age with the Taliban. Consequently, many Afghans have left in desperate predicaments and many still want to leave. The Government's stance is therefore necessary not only for our international security and to protect our way of life, but to rescue the people of Afghanistan from that terrible regime.

I am pleased about the bipartisan support, which is an important aspect of the coalition. I wish that all parties could unite in it. It is important to keep other Muslim states on side. It was easy for people to condemn the attacks on 11 September, but it is more difficult for them to take military action. However, we must maintain the diplomatic initiative; otherwise, bin Laden will succeed in his aim of provoking the third world war—the west against the Muslim countries. That would not be in the interests of the moderate, more sensible Muslim states. Their interests are not served by that; they clearly want a peaceful existence and trade. However, the campaign is a test for their Governments.

No Government is being tested more than that of Pakistan. I join in the tributes paid to that country tonight. When General Musharraf took over, many of us criticised the coup. However, he has been put to the test and he is currently passing it. Demonstrations of 10,000 or 12,000 people in Quetta and Karachi are substantial, but they are a minority in Pakistan.

The coalition is one not simply of countries but of various strands that our action must include. I should like more humanitarian aid to be pledged to those inside and outside Afghanistan when the campaign is over. The action must also include the financial measures that the Chancellor outlined yesterday; the new drive, which the Prime Minister is currently advancing, on the Palestinian question—that must involve the establishment of a Palestinian state—and the military campaign. Those strands must be combined in a strategy. If we continue to do that, the Prime Minister will have my support in taking forward the fight against international terrorism.

6.44 pm

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): I begin with two observations. First, the attendance is disappointing, given the extent of the crisis. Last week's debate was far better attended. That could lead to the conclusion that the House is better attended in the recess than when it is sitting. More hon. Members should be present to discuss the situation.

Secondly, I hope that the Government have noted the mood of most of the contributions so far. Substantial questioning has occurred, and there is a sober, cautious tone. No speech could be described as gung-ho. Unlike last week, Tory Front-Bench Members have made no such contributions. I hope that Ministers who are present will take that into account.

I have been interested in the Government's position on the extent of the conflict in which we are engaged, and in ascertaining to what, exactly, we have signed up. Last week, I considered the legal basis for the conflict. To some people, those points appear pernickety. However, we should know the legal position and the war aims and objectives when engaging in a military conflict. I was present 10 years ago during the debates on the Gulf war, and I have noticed that many hon. Members are less interested now in the aspects that I am considering. Perhaps that reflects the fact that many hon. Members with experience of military conflict have left the House and that such voices are not heard to the same extent.

As I said earlier, the Government did not publish the document, "Defeating International Terrorism: Campaign Objectives", when Mr. Alastair Campbell briefed the press about it last Thursday; it was placed in the Library today. That was not an oversight. I asked 10 Downing street for a copy last Thursday, and my request was refused. It is disappointing that the document was not published then because it is reassuring in many ways. It confines the military aspect of the campaign to Afghanistan. It is reassuring, especially for me and for several other hon. Members, because the last sentence states:

> "Any action taken to achieve our objectives will need to be in conformity with international law, including the United Nations charter and international humanitarian law."

I do not understand the Government's reluctance to publish the document last Thursday. As the campaign proceeds, I hope that the Government will be prepared to share important decisions with a wider public and hon. Members and that they will not be refracted through the prism of Mr. Alastair Campbell's interpretation of events and what he believes that people want to hear.

Last week, I believed that it was important to press the point of article 51 and the United Kingdom letter to the Security Council, which we were bound to produce under international law. Thanks to the good offices of the Secretary of State for International Development, it was published. Lo and behold, there was an important difference between the letters of the United Kingdom Government and the United States Government. The United Kingdom letter did not contain a phrase that appeared in the United States letter. It stated:

"We may find that our self-defence requires further actions with respect to other organisations and other states."

In the United States letter, that phrase appeared directly under the paragraph that dealt with military action. It would be impossible to read the letter without taking the broad hint, as the press did, that military action was being planned against other states.

I welcome the fact that the phrase did not appear in the United Kingdom letter. Its omission suggested that there was no support for broadening the military aspect of the conflict. However, it would have been better to state the aims and objectives earlier. I hope that that lesson has been learned.

Some of the items that have appeared in the press purport to reflect the views of some members of the United States Administration. On Sunday, *The Observer* cited officials close to a group in the American Administration that supports an early strike against Iraq and quoted one as saying:

"We see this war as one against the virus of terrorism. If you have bone marrow cancer, it's not enough to just cut off the patient's foot. You have to do the complete course of chemotherapy. And if that means embarking on the next Hundred Years' War, that's what we're doing."

I do not know how highly placed the unnamed official is. However, the duty Minister is a psychiatrist; I should have thought that anyone who in the space of four short sentences can combine the concepts of virus, bone marrow cancer, amputation, chemotherapy and the hundred years' war is badly in need of psychological profiling.

The Leader of the House is in his place. He has talked about the targeted nature of the military action on several news programmes. It is important to maintain that focus in contrast to the loose talk in other quarters.

I said last week that the real, immediate battle would not take place in the skies above Afghanistan, because there was virtually no contest. We were talking about the deployment of all the modern apparatus of warfare against what was, effectively, decrepit anti-aircraft machinery and small-arms fire. The real battle would take place for public opinion, on the streets of a variety of Muslim countries. The Government should make some attempt to recognise what is happening, and to tell us what they intend to do about it. Over the last week that battle has been lost, and lost overwhelmingly, as far as we can tell from Islamic opinion.

The results of a Gallup poll have been released by CNN. The fact that the results were released by CNN and the poll was conducted by Gallup should give us some indication of the veracity of the findings, which suggest that 83 per cent. of Pakistanis who were consulted supported the Taliban against the United States. Some 82 per cent. termed Osama bin Laden a holy warrior, not a terrorist, and only 12 per cent. believed him to be responsible for the attacks on 11 September.

Given our own perspective, those are dramatic—and dramatically worrying—figures. I would have appreciated some indication from the Foreign Secretary of what is being done to try to combat a feeling that I suspect is far more representative of the Islamic world than many Members would care to admit.

On the same subject, let me say that the last thing a Government engaged in what may seem to be a propaganda war but is, surely, a war about principle, truth and liberal democracy—all of which we are meant to hold dear—should do is allow Mr. Alastair Campbell to give the BBC, ITN and other news organisations a dressing down about how they choose to cover the international situation. Perhaps Mr. Campbell's efforts and skills would be better devoted to trying to win the battle of public opinion where it has to be won—in the Islamic world—rather than to engaging in what looks like panic at best and extreme foolishness at worst.

I also think that it would be useful not to read reports that pressure is being put on Qatar to try to close down Al-Jazeera, which, in contrast to many organs of the press throughout the Muslim world, shows a degree of independence, objectivity and freedom of editorial comment that we in the west would presumably like to see applied, given our belief in liberal democracy. Surely our analysis should conclude that the lack of those elements in many if not all Islamic countries is one aspect of the problem. It was therefore depressing to read in a newspaper that an attempt was being made to curtail the station.

My next point relates to the bombing campaign itself. I do not share the Foreign Secretary's confidence in the efficacy of bombing campaigns, and, unsurprisingly, I do not agree with his view of the bombing campaign in Kosovo. A serious analysis of that campaign suggests that the only thing that was not hit to any great extent was the Serbian army. Lots of other things were hit. It is also possible to argue with some force that, if anything, the conduct of that campaign prolonged Milosevic's hold on power in Serbia rather than loosening it, and that the decisive intervention was the diplomatic intervention of the Russians, who abandoned support for the Milosevic regime.

Even given the best possible interpretation, I hope that no Member would be satisfied with the accuracy of a bombing campaign like that employed in the Kosovan and Serbian conflict. I remind the House that trains, buses, civilian convoys and the Chinese embassy were hit. I cannot believe that anyone would want to see a similar impact in Afghanistan over the coming days and weeks.

It has been argued, with substantial force, that there is no moral equivalence between a campaign that targets civilians and an essentially military campaign in which civilians are collateral damage. I agree with that, as a moral point: in that context, a distinction can be made. I would only make the additional point that for someone who is killed or maimed as a result of action, there is total equivalence, whether death is caused by friendly fire and good intent, or by a directly attributable terrorist atrocity.

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** The hon. Gentleman is right that bombing alone did not win in Kosovo, but does he not accept that there is a difference between what the Government were saying then and what they are saying now? There was an argument then that bombing alone

*[Dr. Julian Lewis]*

might win in Kosovo; I am not aware that the Government have said that bombing alone will win in Afghanistan. I believe the Government's position to be that bombing is a necessary precursor to other military action to win in Afghanistan, and if that is their position I think that Opposition Members owe it to them to support it until we see whether that other military action is indeed effective.

**Mr. Salmond:** The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. One mistake that I think would be generally acknowledged, even perhaps by Ministers in retrospect, was the announcement at the start of the Kosovo action that no other military intervention was being considered. That, I feel, is the equivalent of an announcement during the second world war that only a bombing campaign against continental Europe was envisaged, without a D-day landing. I do not think that the Government would wish to make the same mistake again.

Let me now refer to what I suspect people should hear. I want the Government to take Macbeth's advice:

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well

It were done quickly".

The most important aspect of the present situation is the necessity for speed, and that is why I feel extremely concerned. I know that the wise words are that it will take months and years, and that there cannot be a quick result or an effective early conclusion; but months and years are extremely dangerous in the case of this conflict, for three reasons.

First, the humanitarian clock is ticking. The concern expressed by Labour Members, by the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Dr. Tonge) and by my colleagues in Plaid Cymru over the last week will be shared by a growing number of people. Indeed, I think that everyone is now concerned about the fact that between 5 million and 7 million people risk starvation, but there is overwhelming evidence from aid agencies that in the current circumstances aid cannot get through. The Government say that it is the fault of the Taliban, and they are probably right—it probably is the Taliban's fault in many cases—but if a substantial number of people starve in Afghanistan over the coming weeks and months, believe me, it will not be the Taliban who are held responsible for that humanitarian disaster. The Government and the allies must therefore consider military action that will look for a conclusion sooner rather than later.

It was suggested from Pakistan this evening that 17 November—the onset of Ramadan—is being set as the deadline for the bombing phase of the campaign. Members would be interested to know whether the Government will confirm that during the debate. It is probably impossible to set deadlines, but the importance of Ramadan in the Islamic world, and also the fact that speed is of the essence, suggest that such deadlines might be welcome.

The second factor in favour of quick, early, effective action is public opinion in the Muslim world. Referring to the hitting of the Red Cross depot today, the Foreign Secretary said that no medicines or food had been involved. That is not what the International Committee of the Red Cross is saying, although it has confirmed that, thankfully, no Red Cross personnel were killed. All actions that result in civilian casualties will be as banners throughout the Muslim world, and the longer the action continues, the more difficult things will be.

The third and, in some ways, the strongest reason for an early end to the conflict is the fact that during the military stage of a campaign the chance of action spilling into neighbouring states and other conflicts is at its highest. We have already seen evidence in the past 24 hours of the danger of the simmering cold war in Kashmir becoming a hot one. The chances of spillover are at their greatest when military action is taking place.

Many hon. Members have said that good might come out of evil, and I share that view. I depart from some in believing that it was not possible for the American Administration, as indeed Nelson Mandela has said, simply to fold their hands in the face of the atrocities committed in Washington and New York. However, if we are to have action that, as the Foreign Secretary put it, makes the world a safer place as opposed to an ever more dangerous one, much more thought than we have witnessed today from Government Members needs to be given to the end game of the military action, as well as to the speed with which it is progressing.

I hope that the balance of the contributions that we have heard show that, although the Government have broad support, that support cannot in any way be taken for granted.

7.1 pm

**Mr. Peter Kilfoyle** (Liverpool, Walton): My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Blizzard) made several references to anti-Americanism. That reminded me of a comment made by an American friend of mine, Irwin Stelzer, who would happily be described as on the right of the American political spectrum. He charged me with displaying a visceral anti-Americanism for daring to make some comments about American, and indeed British, policy pertaining to the terrible events of 11 September. I replied that, despite my rather pronounced viscera, there is not one iota of anti-Americanism therein. We have a duty in the House to discuss these issues, but we are having to do so against the background of a charge of anti-Americanism.

Within a week of the terrible events of 11 September, a broadsheet Lobby correspondent had a story about a Cabinet Minister spiked. It was entirely unrelated to the Departments concerned with the events post-11 September and certainly nothing to do with those events, but it was deemed by the editor to be unpatriotic in any way to criticise a member of the Cabinet at such a time. Frankly, there is a dereliction of duty on the part of both the fourth estate and ourselves if we do not raise the issues that are important to us with the candour that should be expected of us.

It is in the context of that constructive candour that I want to respond to some of the points made by the Foreign Secretary. He referred to the overwhelming evidence of the involvement of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. I do not doubt that they are terrible people, guilty of terrible crimes, and that there is evidence against them, but the truth is that the document placed in the Library contained conclusions, not evidence. As I recall, there was a caveat on the top saying that it would not stand up to scrutiny in a court of law.

I do not object to that, but I would like to know, given that there is a Muslim view that we in the west have been less than even-handed in events such as Srebrenica and

Sabra and Shatila, what evidence was presented to Muslim members of the alliance to convince them of the truth of the charges against Osama bin Laden. I do not ask to know what the evidence is, but has it been shared with those people, in order to cement the alliance?

The Foreign Secretary repudiated the notion that bin Laden and his accomplices could be arraigned before an international court. There are learned Members, both Government and Opposition, who will raise these matters with far more eloquence and knowledge than I could ever hope to have, but a question occurred to me: if we accept that the only effective way of dealing with Osama bin Laden is to apprehend him, if that is possible, and arraign him before an American court, where does that leave Muslim public opinion as regards Sharon?

Would the Lebanon be justified in demanding that Ariel Sharon be arraigned before a Lebanese court for the events in Shatila and Sabra? We are talking about international terrorism. I agree with the Foreign Secretary that the International Criminal Court will not have retrospective jurisdiction, but could Cambodia or Chile arraign Henry Kissinger on charges of international terrorism? I ask because that is the history that has informed the Muslim view.

I was taken by the reference to drugs as part of the post facto justification for the military intervention in Afghanistan. I do not recall any suggestion in the past that we should use military force to eradicate that source of narcotics. I also wonder whether the Northern Alliance, as an even greater trafficker in narcotics, would also be fair game for military action. I doubt it, because the realpolitik and the military exigencies dictate otherwise.

If we are talking about international terrorism, let us switch to another part of the world. What do we say to those who support $1.8 billion being dedicated to the fight against the FARC on the ground of combating drug production in Colombia? Leaving aside the fact that defoliants are being spread—memories of Vietnam come to mind—over the areas controlled by the FARC and have infected more than 10,000 Ecuadorians, and that the Brazilian Government will not allow the Colombian army to cross the border in pursuit of alleged FARC supporters, we must consider that that money is being used to support elements within the Colombian Government and its supporters in the Colombian establishment who finance the right-wing death squads and are more involved in the drug trade than the FARC is. We are opening an enormous can of worms. We are told that action is being taken on that matter, but I wonder how consistent it is.

I echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) about the military dangers. We seem to be using traditional modes of warfare to deal with, in the jargon, an asymmetrical threat. I am unclear, and hope for illumination, about whether the bombing is intended to break the Taliban and bring them to the bargaining table or to prepare for ground troops to go in. If it is the former, I presume that it is already failing, because there are no signs, after a second week, that the Taliban are breaking up and are prepared to hand over bin Laden—even if they knew where he was.

If the bombing is to prepare for ground troops, we will shortly have the snows upon us, so it is a preparation for a very long haul indeed. I have not yet seen the publication on objectives that has been placed in the Library, but when I do I shall examine the objectives closely in the context of what I supposed was to be a short-term military action in Afghanistan.

Intelligence is also very important. Al-Qaeda has been set up as a deliberately nebulous cell system in which normal modes of intelligence such as electronic eavesdropping do not appear to work. Given the signal failure of the intelligence services to do anything to prepare for the terrible events of 11 September—I did not expect them to know the detail—I wonder how much better informed we are about the present disposition of al-Qaeda. How good is our intelligence, because that is the basis on which we must judge the military action that is taking place? I fear that we are literally and metaphorically shooting in the dark.

My greatest concern is the voice of those who wish to widen the war. The way in which elements in the American Administration have sought to shape an agenda that is dramatically different from that of the British Government is no secret. I would like to put on record my support and admiration for the Prime Minister's attempts to rein in those who wish to widen the war aims to include those other countries.

On British television on the night of 11 September, Richard Perle, the chairman of the Defence Review Board—a not uninfluential position—and a man formerly known by the sobriquet "the Prince of Darkness" urged that we ought to widen our aims beyond Afghanistan. He named those other countries that he felt should be the object of our military ire, including Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya. Subsequently, that has been reinforced by Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, John Negroponte and others who would be fairly described as fully paid-up members of the hawkish tendency within the present Administration. Our Prime Minister has his hands full in trying to counteract that within the alliance.

I do not see that as an anti-American comment; quite the reverse. I wish all power to the elbow of Colin Powell, who seems to be trying to pursue a far broader and more consensual path in resolving these admittedly difficult issues.

We have to be patient and cautious in how we deal with the matters facing the alliance. My mind races to my reading, many moons ago, of Thucydides on the Peloponnesian war. While Pericles carved his name out for posterity with fine and warm words that have gone down through the ages, I recall the words at the same time of King Archidamus, the leader of the Spartan league, who, in a typically laconic speech, said:

"slow and cautious may be seen as wise and sensible."

I do not have to remind all the erudite Members who surround me that the Spartans won that war. These should be the watchwords for the alliance as we go down this difficult path: slow and cautious.

7.12 pm

**Mr. Paul Goodman** (Wycombe): Having heard the concise and cogent speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and the reception from Labour Back Benchers to the speech of the Foreign Secretary, I am not sure whether there is more support for the Government's position from Opposition Members than from Labour Members. However, the robustly pro-American contribution of the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Blizzard) has perhaps put me right on that point—but who knows?

*[Mr. Paul Goodman]*

Let us suppose that news was brought to the House now that bin Laden had been captured, in the phrase of President Bush, "dead or alive". Would that bring to an end the current anti-terrorist conflict, as it is best described? The answer clearly is no, for at least three reasons.

First, the American Government have made it clear that their aims in the counter-terrorist struggle are not restricted to the capture of bin Laden, dead or alive. Having heard the statements of the Home Secretary and the Chancellor yesterday, and the Foreign Secretary's speech today, I believe that the British and American Governments are at one on this. Clearly, the capture of bin Laden would not bring the anti-terrorist conflict to an end.

The second reason is that the humanitarian effort in Afghanistan would clearly continue. Now that the Government have begun to undertake that commitment, I do not believe that they would renege on it. Of course that humanitarian effort would be impeded by the Taliban, so the conflict must continue in that second sense.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is a fundamental truth that the west remains as open to terrorist attack today as it was on 11 September. Mercifully, we have, so far, largely been spared such events in this country, but we have no guarantee that such events will not happen over the next six months, year or period of years to come. In short, to use one of the Government's own phrases, we are clearly in this for the long haul. I believe that the public are beginning to note that now, although it has always been the case.

Hon. Members may detect the first signs that a minority—I stress that it is a minority—of public opinion is beginning to seem uncertain and somewhat confused. Why is this so? There are many reasons. We live in a consumer society in which people expect things to be done quickly. We also live in a society dominated to a degree by the media—in which I once worked—and a society in which questions are put to the Government, of whatever composition, all the time. The Government are open to all sorts of probing and piercing questions that can cause public doubt and division. Finally, civilian deaths have begun sadly to occur. I can say no more on that than was expressed eloquently by my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) and the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell). These are the reasons that help to explain why there is a certain mood of public doubt that did not exist a week ago.

I wish to apply all of these matters to my constituency which—according to the Muslim Council of Great Britain—contains the largest proportion of Muslim voters in any Conservative-held seat. As has been the case throughout the country, there have been racist and Islamophobic attacks in High Wycombe, which should be utterly condemned. I pay tribute to Mr. Ranjit Dheer, the chair—as he would style himself—of the local Commission for Racial Equality, who last week drew a fine balance between condemning such attacks and seeing them in their correct proportion. It is fair to say that, so far, things have gone reasonably well in terms of race relations and how they have been affected by the conflict, although I would not wish to be complacent.

Now that the mood among a section of the public may have changed, it is right to ask what could happen if things went wrong or if there were a terrorist incident here of the kind that I have described. One thing is vital. Whether we are black or white, Muslim or Christian—or of no faith at all—we are all in this together. I urge all my white constituents—I cannot find a more convenient phrase—to think about the perspective from which the Muslim community sees the conflict. The Muslim community is of course utterly condemnatory of the attacks of 11 September, but they see them in a different context from the majority of my constituents. They are especially worried about the situation in Pakistan and what could happen to the Government there if things go wrong.

Many of my constituents come from Kashmir and apply to Kashmir the same standards that they see the west apply to the situation in Northern Ireland and the middle east. They are highly critical of the west for not paying Kashmir as much attention as it has sometimes paid to other issues. I scarcely need add that they have a particular point of view on the middle east and are affected by the very tense relations between the Muslim world and the west. I often think that the Muslim world feels at a recent disadvantage, having been for many centuries—I use the next word in a generalised sense—"ahead" of the west in the middle ages and other times.

It is also important for the Muslim community—if I may say so without appearing to lecture or patronise that community—to understand the point of view of those of us who have lived longer in the west. The hon. Member for Waveney made some telling and poignant points about the collective memory in Britain of the American contribution to this country's freedom in the last century. The Americans helped to save Britain in the first and second world wars. Many hon. Members will have memories, however distant or handed down, of lend-lease in the second world war. It is sometimes difficult for the Muslim community to understand the reason behind the ties between Britain and America, but it is important that it should try to do so. Certainly, many Muslims in my constituency have agreed with that point of view when speaking to me.

Conservative Members wish the Government well and support their actions, but I note that over the past few days their command—and that of the American Government—of the situation has seemed a little less certain than it was. We may be heading towards a cloud.

7.22 pm

**Mr. Calum MacDonald** (Western Isles): My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary drew parallels between the choices we face in this crisis and conflict and the choices that were faced in Kosovo. I have strong memories of the debates on Kosovo and the Gulf war. On both occasions, I supported the military action taken by the then Government. Indeed, in the case of the former Yugoslavia, I called for military intervention in Croatia and Bosnia long before the need for it was accepted by other hon. Members and when I was in a tiny minority.

I fully accept the need for the United Kingdom to use military force on occasions when there is no other alternative, when that force is proportionate and targeted, when it is in line with international law and when it has a good prospect of success. However, there is no hiding

the fact that what we are facing in Afghanistan is immeasurably more difficult, more fraught and more complex than in the Gulf or in Kosovo. I believe that the action is right, as long as it continues to be targeted and proportionate. It also has a good chance of success, as long as we are clear headed about our goals, but we must be honest about the scale and the difficulty of what lies ahead.

Intervention in the former Yugoslavia was always going to be fairly straightforward. Tackling the Serbian paramilitary regime was like kicking in a rotten door. Regardless of the Yugoslav army training that many people mentioned or the considerable weaponry at the disposal of the paramilitaries, no real, deep self-belief was felt underneath their nationalist bravado. When they were confronted by determined western intervention, they collapsed. The same was broadly true of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In neither case was an extensive or protracted ground campaign eventually necessary.

In the case of the terrorist network we face today, however, and especially given the protection it receives from the Government of Afghanistan, the situation is very different. The terrorist network has no lack of self-belief. On the contrary, we face an enemy that is confident, even fanatical, in its views and determined to impose them on the world. That self-belief is the most powerful weapon that the terrorists have and that is why, as several hon. Members have already said, winning this battle will require a battle of minds as well as a military battle.

If it is to succeed, our military campaign must be embedded in and shaped by a much wider political strategy. The military campaign must be accompanied by sustained political initiatives, especially with those countries where the terrorist networks find their sympathy, their support and, of course, their recruits. Those initiatives must involve not only the Governments of those countries but must engage as much as possible with ordinary opinion in those societies.

We face a paradox, because the geographic focus of the military campaign in Afghanistan will be different from the geographic focus of the wider political campaign that has to happen at the same time. The military strategy must remain firmly targeted on the Taliban regime and the bin Laden network. We must be clear that the immediate goals are the removal of the Taliban regime and the destruction of the bin Laden network, because the latter will not happen without the former. Incidentally, I believe that it would be wrong, and indeed foolish—as several hon. Members have already said—to widen the military goals further and to consider any new action against the Iraqi regime.

The focus of the wider political strategy that accompanies the military conflict must be the middle east, to tackle the Arab-Israeli conflict and to try to end the dangerous hostility between the Arab world and the west. We must drain the swamp of discontent and frustration that feeds that hostility, which is based on decades of economic and political failure in those states. That will require an economic—as well as political, ideological and cultural—engagement with the Arab world on a scale that we have not envisaged before.

We are used to thinking of the middle east as an area in which American interests are most obviously engaged and in which European Governments are largely spectators. However, Europe could be said to have an even bigger stake than the US. The Islamic states of the middle east are Europe's nearest neighbours. The Arab world is our backyard, not America's. Of course, we in Europe are also the backyard of the Arab world, which is why some 20 million Muslims now live in the European Union. For that reason, we cannot allow US interests alone to dictate western policy in the middle east and the wider Arab world. That is not an anti-American sentiment. Indeed, I lived for eight years in that country and still have close connections with it. We must have a genuine partnership between the US and Europe that involves a fundamental re-analysis of our policies towards the middle east, including our relationship with states such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. That does not mean that we should turn our backs on those Governments or abandon them, but the present policy is unsustainable and we must try to find a new way forward.

I warmly welcome the effort that the Government are putting into the middle east peace process and the meeting with President Arafat yesterday. However, we must have a collective European effort if it is to have a real impact. It must also be sustained and pursued beyond the immediate horizon of the conflict in Afghanistan.

I also applaud the way in which the Government have gone about fulfilling their humanitarian obligations to the refugees in Afghanistan. Particular credit must go to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development for the way in which she has raised this matter and pursued it on an international stage.

In addition to relieving the immediate humanitarian need in Afghanistan, we should also consider the wider need in the region. There have been reports of malnutrition, and there is the prospect of hunger in bordering states such as Uzbekistan. That must also be covered by the humanitarian effort.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the post-conflict political goal in Afghanistan. I support the idea that the Taliban should be replaced by a broad-based Government under UN auspices. It is desirable that the political structure to emerge in Afghanistan after this conflict should bring stability, economic progress and sensible law to that country. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, we must not walk away from Afghanistan after the conflict has ended, but it is even more important that we do not walk away from the middle east.

Our post-war political aims in Afghanistan are desirable and correct, but we must not forget that the main, long-term political effort must be focused elsewhere in the middle east. Unless we make progress in that region, we will be back in this position inside a decade. We missed the opportunity that arose after the Gulf war, and we are suffering the consequences. We must not miss that opportunity again.

7.31 pm

**Mr. Peter Duncan** (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale): I come to the debate with little experience of foreign affairs, but I have had five weeks experience of explaining recent events to two children aged five and seven. Along with millions of fathers, in this land and many others, I have faced the challenge of explaining and rationalising to my youngsters what has happened to humanity in the wake of the events in New York, Washington, Philadelphia and Afghanistan. There is nothing more critical than the eyes of a child.

*[Mr. Peter Duncan]*

I have therefore attempted to rationalise in my own mind recent events, and especially the role of the coalition in the past few days and weeks. I consider the coalition's role to have three aspects, each of which has a critical part to play in winning the conflict. It is important that the coalition remains focused on the target that has been set. That target is Afghanistan, and more specifically the Taliban regime. We must not be diverted into seeking a wider remit throughout the middle east until the time is right. The coalition's first target is to find and bring to justice Osama bin Laden. Many hon. Members from all parties have stated already that that is a challenge in itself, but the coalition accepts that it has to play a complicated role.

I commend the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) for bringing to our attention the lack of objective statements to the House in the past few days. That omission does not reflect well on the Government, especially when it comes to maintaining the coalition that exists in this Chamber on this very complicated matter. Moreover, the project will last a long time. As the Foreign Secretary noted earlier, it will not be over in days or weeks. We must manage expectations and prepare the British people for that. They are entitled to a rational explanation of the duration of the expedition that is under way, and to a realistic assessment of the demands that will be placed on this country, and on others.

The second objective of the coalition is to return stable government to Afghanistan. It cannot be acceptable that in many conflicts over the past few decades, we have left the theatre of conflict in a poorer state than when we found it. That cannot be allowed to happen in Afghanistan. We have a critical role to play in introducing an inclusive and fair administration to Afghanistan. It is tempting to foresee an easy solution to the question of the post-Taliban regime, but I respectfully suggest that the easiest solution in that context might not be the fairest or the most inclusive.

The coalition's third—and equally important—objective has to do with the humanitarian effort in that part of the world. Many hon. Members today have noted that the aid now reaching people there amounts to 500 tonnes per day. That is nowhere near an acceptable amount. We have little time left in which to accelerate provision, and time is against us. I consider the response to be pitifully inadequate, as I understand that it amounts to only one seventh of the amount needed to maintain a population threatened by the onset of winter. I look to the Government for some reassurance that they accept the fact that the war will be won as much by the aid convoys as in the air. Some people have estimated that as few as four weeks remain to make a significant impact in that regard.

In addition, it is important that we manage people's expectations, both in our constituencies and in the wider world, about how long the campaign will last. It is likely to last months or years, not weeks. The challenge is to maintain the high level of support that exists in the country. I do not agree with the view expressed today that there is a great groundswell of doubt about the legitimacy of the action being taken. My experience is that support for the action being taken by our airmen and troops is resolute and strong, rather than doubting and dubious. However, we must manage expectations, especially when it comes to explaining that the action is a means to an end, and that that end is the end of the Taliban regime.

I believe that this war is the second media war. We must accept that much of that manipulation of the expectations of people in the UK will be done outwith this Chamber—by CNN, the BBC, and so on. Two images prevalent over the past days and weeks have presented a false picture of the unfolding conflict. First, as happened in connection with Kosovo, we are presented with images of smart bombs and laser precision. Although we have those capabilities in our armoury, the dangerous impression is given to people that the conflict is clinical and clean. If we try to convince our constituents that that is the case, we will be misleading them. The conflict is complicated, and is not a matter of laser precision. Lasers may play a part in it, but the conflict will remain dirty. It will no doubt get worse as time goes on.

Secondly, we are presented with images of destruction and so-called collateral damage that contrast starkly with notions of laser-guided bombs. We must accept that images of destruction are influencing people. There are early signs that members of the al-Qaeda network are now masters of public relations, and that they realise that they have the power to manipulate the media. This week's media tour of a bomb site is part of a worrying trend that will continue to develop in the weeks to come.

We must balance the critical reception of television images of collateral damage with courage in the knowledge that civilian casualties are inevitable. That does not mean that they are in any way acceptable, but I am afraid that in this conflict they are inevitable.

It is important to keep the anthrax threat in proportion. Anthrax is a remarkably difficult part of the armoury with which to deliver any threat to this part of the world. However, it is effective in creating terror, and that is what the terrorists are after, rather than a huge impact. The danger is that images in the newspapers of people with blue suits and helmets give rise to terror in the United Kingdom, and that is a win for the terrorists. We all have a part to play in a dignified and rational response to the anthrax threat, but let us not get it out of proportion, for that would be a win for the terrorists.

Much has been made this evening of the link to the middle east peace process. I listened with interest yesterday to the Prime Minister's comments on a viable Palestinian state. I concur entirely with the views of many in this House that solving the middle east conflict is crucial to this problem. However, we have to be careful about the messages we are sending. Now that Yasser Arafat has come for meetings in London in the aftermath of the atrocities in New York and Washington, we must be careful about how we present the way in which negotiations develop hereafter. This is not about the Palestinian problem, as was shown in the information we were given a couple of weeks ago. This plot was hatched when the middle east peace process was in a promising state. Even at such an encouraging time for the peace process, the al-Qaeda network was plotting this atrocity against the western world. Of course, resolving the peace process in the middle east is important, but there is a danger that risk and reward will become connected in the minds of the terrorists.

I remain committed to support for the Government's position. We believe that their response is proportionate and just. Earlier this week, my five-year-old asked me

whether wars were okay. It was one of the most difficult questions I have been asked during the past six weeks. I responded with a wee bit of politicians' faff—a bit of flannel. Ultimately, after rationalising things in my mind, it came down to the fact that although not all wars are just, this is a just war.

7.44 pm

**Mr. George Galloway** (Glasgow, Kelvin): I apologise for the sound quality of this contribution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but, although unwell, I wanted to contribute to a very fine debate, and I am grateful to you for allowing me to do so.

The right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude), who is not in his place, made a fine and thoughtful speech. The Conservative party must be well off indeed if such a man can be on their Back Benches. However, in praising his speech I take issue with a fundamental error that he made.

The right hon. Gentleman was right to describe his visit to Ground Zero in the awesome way that he did. He was right to talk about the sight, the taste and the smell of what he found there. He was wrong, however, to say that the crime committed on 11 September was of a dimension that has never been seen before. I submit that that error of analysis leads us to the current juncture and is intrinsic to the weakness of our position internationally. No one could have said that if they had walked with me through the ruins of Beirut in 1982 where, for week after week, General Sharon reduced an Arab capital city to ashes. He presided over a massacre in two Palestinian refugee camps the like of which had not been seen since the second world war. The stench of dead men, women and children pervaded the whole of the western part of the city of Beirut. The terror instilled by the fragmentation and phosphorus bombs, the fuel-air explosives, the napalm and the butchery in the camps remains a potent factor in the lives of the Lebanese and Palestinian people to this day, almost 20 years later.

I accept that the right hon. Member for Horsham believed what he said to be true. That is the point. It is because what happened in America is being invested with so much more value and horror than equally horrific things that have happened in Arab and Muslim countries that our position is so weak and difficult internationally.

I was not going to mention this, but as the Foreign Secretary scolded us so in his rather schoolmasterly way in his opening comments, may I say that there are no supporters of the Taliban or bin Laden on our side of the argument? In fact, the only supporters of the Taliban are in the Government's coalition. It contains the only countries which, until a few days ago—and, in one case, until now—maintain diplomatic relations with the Taliban and with the Arab Afghans, to whom I shall return, who are the core problem in this conflict.

The American and British Governments invented the Taliban. I do not say that to score points, although that is irresistible for those of who stood in the Chamber and bored the House stiff with warnings of the dark night that would ensue under those holy warriors—those freedom fighters—whom the American and British Governments were arming, financing and training. After all, bin Laden's guards were trained in what can only be described as a terrorist training camp near Fort William by the Special Air Service of the British Army. So there are no supporters of the Taliban or bin Laden among my right hon. and hon. Friends. To sketch out a simplistic argument saying that there is no alternative, as was done from the Dispatch Box today, is a grave error. In politics, there is seldom only one alternative. There is seldom no other way to skin a cat than the way advanced by the Government.

I rise to speak against the iron consensus of the three Front Benches. It is clear that they have their forces here this evening behind their position. I hope that they are not fooling themselves that their voters and supporters do not feel great unease about and considerable opposition to the course on which they have embarked.

After all, even if the opinion polls are correct, my friends and I speak for about 10 million people in this country. They are Labour and Liberal Democrat voters and, judging by my postbag, they are also Conservative voters. Let us not imagine that that iron consensus really speaks for the whole country, as anyone who has read a correspondence column in a serious newspaper, has listened to a phone-in programme on a serious radio show or seen the growing demonstrations—not only in this country, but 250,000 people in Italy on Sunday and 500,000 people in India on the same day—will know.

Neither should the Government believe—this is an even more serious error—that the support of juntas, potentates and western-dependent leaders for their course of action represents opinion in the countries that are under the heel of those juntas, potentates and dictatorships. I have heard hon. Members on both sides of the House this evening praise someone called President Musharraf. He appointed himself as President. He is a military dictator who seized power and imprisoned for life the elected Prime Minister of Pakistan.

As was stated admirably clearly by one hon. Member on the Opposition Benches, 83 per cent. of the people of Pakistan entirely oppose the policy of the self-appointed President of Pakistan and yet he has been praised here for his courage. Courage in what? In usurping power from the elected Government and ramming through a policy that is opposed by 83 per cent. of the people he governs? Apart from the questionable morality of that policy, it is hardly a stable basis for a coalition.

If this conflict stretches, as it seems it must, through a difficult winter, with large numbers of casualties through hunger and for other reasons, there is a real danger that Pakistan will be tipped into what I would call a Talibanisation of its politics. I do not need to remind the House that that Talibanised Pakistan would be a nuclear-armed Pakistan.

That is the truth. We have assembled in a coalition for "enduring freedom" some of the least free countries in the world. It is their lack of freedom that contributes to the swamp of grievance and injustice that is felt by many in the Islamic world—a swamp from which the monstrous mutations who created the havoc and destruction on 11 September came.

Listening to the Foreign Secretary as he swung across the present world position, one would not have gained any smattering of an understanding that this war is going extremely badly. Frankly, in the no doubt unintentional misreading of the findings of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in Doha, the Foreign Secretary did not tell the House that the Governments of the Islamic community beseeched the Americans and British to avoid civilian casualties. Nor did he mention the finding of the

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Foreign Ministers of the Arab League, who declared, in an echo of NATO Ministers, that any subsequent attack on any Arab country would be regarded as an attack on all Arab countries. I mention that because it is clear from a cursory reading of the newspapers on Sunday that Afghanistan is not the only target in this coalition against international terrorism.

I accept that the British Government have been making noises that would tend to restrict the conflict to Afghanistan—I do not know if it is because some hard cop, nice cop/good cop, bad cop routine is being played out or whether it is genuine, and frankly it does not matter. However, the decision over

"which snakes in the swamp",

to quote Richard Perle, the United States military goes after will be made not in London, in Downing street, but in the United States. If the US decides to launch an attack on an Arab country or Arab countries, it will pitch us from what is shaping up to be a disaster into an international catastrophe.

Why do I say that the war is going so badly? In every war we are told that the bombardment is aimed only at military targets. We are told that the targets are being scientifically and forensically calibrated and that the weaponry is of a new generation that will minimise collateral damage. In every conflict in which that charade is played out it proves to be absurd, as subsequent examination of the accuracy rates of the ordnance that was fired and dropped and the most cursory examination of casualty wards in the countries attacked makes clear. In this conflict, it is more absurd than in any other recent conflict.

Do you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one of the main weapons being deployed against the cities of Afghanistan—the poorest country in the world—is the B52 bomber? Indeed, in some cases it is the very same aeroplanes that carpet-bombed Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. That is what a B52 bomber does. It does not even pretend to be forensic, laser-guided or targeted. It is a large aeroplane that opens its bomb doors out of which fall huge piles of high explosives. The poorest country in the world, Afghanistan, is being bombarded 24 hours a day, with a brief pause in a mockery of religious acknowledgement during the daylight hours of Friday. There has been a 10-day round-the-clock, massive bombardment of a country which before the conflict started was best described as being on the verge of the stone age.

I was in a debate in Trinity college, Dublin, on Thursday with a very brave woman—Marie Colvin, who is a supporter of the war and a journalist on that most doveish newspaper *The Sunday Times*, whose eye was gouged out in Sri Lanka recently. A heroic war correspondent, she ridiculed the idea that we are bombing military targets in Afghanistan and was in a good position to do so as someone who has spent many weeks there. She ridiculed the idea that we would be attacking command and control centres at Kabul airport, as the Defence Secretary said in his press conference the other day. She laughed at that, saying, "I've been in Kabul airport and the airport building is practically a mud hut that can only receive incoming phone calls." That area is being bombed, we are told, again and again. She ridiculed the idea that Afghanistan could have enough military targets for even one day's bombing, never mind 10, 20, 30 or 40, or that one could bomb Afghanistan round the clock and not be killing large numbers of innocent Afghan civilians.

This will be my final point, as many hon. Members wish to speak. This war is being waged on the wrong target. The attack on 11 September has nothing to do with the Afghan people. None of the terrorists who attacked America were Afghans. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, the attack was planned from European and north American bases. The Afghan people have been hijacked by the Afghan Arab formations of extremists, paid for by Saudi Arabia during the war against the Najibullah Government, armed with American weapons and, as I said, even trained in our own country. It is the Afghan Arab terrorists who flew out of that swamp of grievance that I talked about. It is not that the Taliban are shielding bin Laden: it is the other way around. Bin Laden's forces are the only organised force in the whole country with money and with the logistical ability to run themselves as a quasi state, so to pound mercilessly the civilian population of Afghanistan is morally grotesque. To expect to keep international opinion on one's side with the equivalent of Mike Tyson in a ring with a five-year-old child, beating it mercilessly round after round, is ridiculous beyond words. If we leave morals aside and talk only about efficacy, we see the real danger in what we are doing.

In my speech of 14 September, I warned that if we embarked on an unwise course we would create 10,000 bin Ladens. Does anyone watching the flames, from Kuala Lumpur to Karachi, from Quetta to Jordan to Oman where our own forces are—where the biggest demonstration in the country's history took place last week—to the streets of all the Arab capitals, think that I was exaggerating and that from that great mass of anger there will not come 10,000 bin Ladens? I submit that the course of action on which we are embarked and in which I predict we will still be involved next year—perhaps next year at this time—with casualties beyond imagination risks becoming the very third world war that the bin Laden fanatics set out to achieve with their attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September.

8.2 pm

**Mr. Paul Keetch** (Hereford): It is always a difficult task to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway), who always speaks with such passion and determination. Although I do not agree with everything that he said, he speaks for a valid view that exists—quite rightly—in all three political parties and among those people who do not subscribe to any political party. It is a view that we would be wise to listen to, because the hon. Gentleman has direct experience in these areas.

As a spokesman from the Liberal Democrat Front Bench, it is also difficult for me to follow my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) in a debate where he has made one of the opening speeches. He, too, speaks with passion, conviction and eloquence and it is sometimes difficult to follow him.

Through the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, I thank the Ministry of Defence for keeping me and the Conservative spokesman up to date on events. Yesterday,

I attended a briefing with the three service chiefs and the Secretary of State which was extremely useful. It enabled us to put into some context the military aims of the Government and the coalition that has been assembled. At that briefing one thing was clear: the action in which we are engaged could take a long time—as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin pointed out. Tonight, I do not want to speculate on the level or degree of action, on the tactics that may or may not be used or even on the equipment that might be used. There are enough armchair generals filling our television and radio stations doing that. However, it is right, as Sir Michael Boyce, the chief of defence staff, said, that we could be in for some long action.

**Mr. Desmond Swayne** (New Forest, West): As regards the length of that action, does the hon. Gentleman support the call made by one of his spokesmen, the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Dr. Tonge), that there should be a pause for humanitarian aid to be brought into the theatre?

**Mr. Keetch:** As I have just said, we should not speculate on the degree, intensity or movement of that action. I simply suggest to the hon. Gentleman that tomorrow morning he reads in *Hansard* my speech and the speech made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife.

Last week, I said in the House that protection against civilian casualties—in Kabul as well as in New York and London—is for us a duty. However, we have to accept that in any military action—no matter how well targeted we believe it might be, and whatever the sophistication of the equipment we might use—there will be civilian casualties. War is not some kind of Nintendo game that is played by merely pressing buttons: it involves death. In the planning that has taken place at the Ministry of Defence and, I hope, at the Defence Department in the Pentagon and at Tampa, I am sure that every effort has been made to minimise the casualties to which action by our armed forces might lead. However, we should remain vigilant, in that securing targets from distant satellites and aircraft can sometimes prove mistaken.

It has been said before, and it is worth repeating, that our armed forces are some of the best in the world. Indeed they are. Whether they are in Macedonia or Sierra Leone, in the Gulf or simply fighting foot and mouth, they are some of the best trained in the world. The Prime Minister spoke today about public services, and we should remember that the members of Her Majesty's armed forces are also our public servants. We should be proud of them.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin spoke about Pakistan. I am glad that Colin Powell has recently been in Pakistan. I am also particularly glad that Chairman Arafat was in London yesterday. He met my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife and my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Inverness, West (Mr. Kennedy), who expressed to him our support for the Government's effort to put the middle east process further up the agenda. It is not true to suggest that American foreign policy in the middle east, or anywhere else in the world, justifies in any way the events of 11 September. That is grotesque. However, it is true to say that if, as a result of those grotesque efforts, there is an impetus to increase the momentum of the peace process that could be a good thing. That is something that will be supported by all of us in the House. It would be opposed by only one man: Osama bin Laden. He does not want to see that peace process succeed. He is the one person who desperately wants to bring the middle east into the catastrophe that we heard about earlier. Although I may not agree with all that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin has said recently, he and I both want to stop that catastrophe and agree that bin Laden wants to see it happen.

Maintaining that international coalition—that worldwide consensus—is incredibly important. It is the most important thing that we have to do. That is why I share the concerns expressed on both sides of the House about talk of extending the military action beyond Afghanistan. We should do what we are doing at present. Let us get that right before we start talking about other targets or other countries. I particularly welcomed the words of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle).

During the past 10 days, I have spoken to a number of people about what is going on. I spoke to someone who was involved in the training to which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin referred. I received an interesting e-mail from Mr. Mark Evans. For 12 years he was a civil servant—a defence analyst who worked in the UK Ministry of Defence and the US Department of Defence. He is a former member of the Conservative party and was chairman of the Bow Group defence committee for some time.

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): A great man.

**Mr. Keetch:** Indeed, he is a great man—he has joined the Liberal Democrats. He said:

"What is needed in the current situation are calm, sensible actions, designed to alleviate Muslim fears and isolate terrorist individuals."

I agree with him entirely. That, by and large, is certainly what we support and what the Government and the coalition aim will involve, because it is understood that the problem will not be solved by military action alone.

The huge humanitarian effort about which my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park spoke so eloquently is needed. Diplomatic action and financial action are needed, as are the legal and extradition changes, which is why Liberal Democrats said yesterday in response to the Government's various statements that we shall support the necessary action. We need to carry out the kind of long-term intelligence work that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) mentioned. However, I must tell him that we shall not be able to make judgments about that intelligence work because of its very nature. As has been said before in quoting what an IRA terrorist said after the bombing, the intelligence community has to get it right every time, but the terrorist only needs to get it right once.

I shall not speak for much longer because many other hon. Members wish to speak, but it is important that time be spent now on beginning to plan what kind of Afghanistan should exist when the action ends. Far too often, the west has wandered in, intervened, done something and then wandered out. We must not do that this time. Whatever the shape and future of Afghanistan after these events, it must not simply be the preserve of one group—whether the Tajiks, the Uzbeks in the north or the Pashtuns in the south. The former king may have a role to play—I hope that he has—but whatever the

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outcome, it must involve international security and the UN. That is why my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Inverness, West was right when he said in *The Times* on Saturday:

> "Faced as we are with the menace of global terrorism, which endangers all nations and all governments, our protection lies in an international consensus."

My party has always been an internationalist one. That is why we support this international action now, and why we look forward to an international resolution in the future.

8.12 pm

**Mr. Michael Clapham** (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Keetch). I agree with much of what he said, but I shall take a different approach. I want to deal with four points that are essential for a sustained peace. I have not yet read the objectives document, but the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who has seen it, says that it does indeed refer to the boundaries of the conflict being those of Afghanistan and that the conflict will be pursued within international law.

Before I make my four points, it would be disingenuous of me if I did not tell the House about my stance on the issue. I believe that the perpetrators of the atrocity should be brought to justice, that the quest should involve bringing them to justice and that that should be done within the confines of international law. That is why I support the suggestion that the people who have carried out the atrocities should be tried by an international criminal court.

The first of my four points has been mentioned time and again. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. MacDonald) dwelt on it. It concerns the need to develop, in the peace that follows the conflict, an understanding with the Islamic world. The west, including all of Europe and north America, must engage in a closer relationship with the world of Islam. From that understanding, we can develop a new relationship that can pave the way to a more peaceful world.

This week, I was heartened to note that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had taken the initiative and invited Yasser Arafat to London; I understand that the Foreign Secretary also attended the meeting. I believe that there will be a meeting with Ariel Sharon, which I hope will pave the way towards peace in the middle east. Nevertheless, peace in the middle east can be guaranteed only if the Americans fully support the solution. Without American support, there can be no lasting peace in the middle east.

I also believe that the United Kingdom and the USA must consider a review of their bombing of Iraq. If we are to engage with the Muslim world to begin a new relationship, the bombing of Iraq must be reviewed and we must develop a new dialogue with that country. Those two events have fuelled the undercurrent of unrest in the Islamic world that has led to the terrorist atrocity. What has happened in the middle east does not provide an excuse for the atrocity, but it does begin to explain it.

My second point is that drugs are used not only to raise money but as an instrument of terrorism, and there is evidence to support that fact. My colleagues and I who sit on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly heard a presentation by the deputy director of Interpol. Some of the information that she gave was quite astounding.

Before I refer to that information, I should like to deal with the comments that my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) made about drugs in Colombia and the FARC. Like him, I am sceptical about the Colombian plan. Nevertheless, we can clearly see a difference in the situations in Afghanistan and Europe.

In last week's presentation, we were told that the majority of heroin used in Europe—75 per cent.—comes from Afghanistan and that 3,275 tonnes of heroin were trafficked into Europe in 2000. The transit trail goes either through the former Yugoslavia and Albania or through central Asia, Russia and into Europe. Intelligence shows that several Algerian terrorist leaders were present at a meeting in Albania, which was probably attended by Osama bin Laden and at which they planned the route that the heroin would take through that area into Europe. Although there is conflicting evidence, I believe that that meeting took place some time in 1998.

Another link associates bin Laden with the heroin trail. The brother of one of the leaders of the Egyptian organisation that operates with him led a Kosovo Liberation Army unit during the Kosovo conflict. Evidence clearly shows that the heroin route into Europe goes through areas that were under KLA control and links the trade to Kosovo and Albania. The deputy director of Interpol put that evidence to the civilian dimension of security committee.

My third point relates closely to my fourth. In considering the conduct of the conflict, it is essential that we bear in mind the fact that other central Asian areas face dire problems because of terrorism. For example, the Republic of Uzbekistan is confronting a terrorist movement called the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The IMU has made it clear that it opposes democratic secular Governments. In understanding how the conflict could go beyond Afghanistan, we must be aware of the fact that some of the new democracies may be threatened by terrorism.

In that context, NATO must develop a taskforce and its remit should include an anti-drugs activity. It would have to work with the intelligence services of Europe and north America, as well as with organisations such as Interpol. NATO must face up to the challenge because hard drugs are being used as an instrument of terror. Many of my colleagues know from their constituencies that hard drugs sap the strength of a community and break down people's confidence in their police force's ability to protect them. For that reason, hard drugs should be treated in the same was as any other terrorist activity. They threaten our security and should come under NATO's remit.

Finally, in the aftermath of the conflict, we must be aware that people who believe in national missile defence will suggest that it is the solution. Close examination of that system clearly shows that it would make the world a more dangerous place. National missile defence or European ballistic missile defence would halt or even reverse the progress that has been made in the former USSR to reduce nuclear arms. The number of nuclear warheads has fallen to about 5,780 and additional strategic reduction measures will reduce that further to 3,000 by 2007. However, if national missile defence goes ahead

we can expect the Russians to retaliate by not reducing warheads or, indeed, by adding more. That would make the world a more dangerous place.

As other hon. Members want to speak, I conclude by stressing that the west must react positively to the challenge that it will face in the aftermath of the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan. It must harmonise relations between the two great civilisations of Christianity and Islam because that will reduce the threat of terrorist activity. Moreover, as part of the framework of the anti-ballistic missile treaty, a new economic and political relationship with Russia will pave the way for a much safer world.

8.24 pm

**Hugh Robertson** (Faversham and Mid-Kent): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak in this debate.

I start by adding my support for the Government's handling of the crisis thus far. I wanted to speak not merely to do that but because I believe that we have reached a turning point in the conflict. I asked to speak not because I have any great history as a moralist or the legal expertise of some Labour Members, but simply because when this country last went to war I went as a young soldier of 28 years old. I wanted to bring some of those experiences to bear on the debate.

I pay tribute, as the House might expect, to those in our services, and most critically to their families. In my experience of the Gulf, the most difficult part was what happened at home. When I got back, my parents told me of their many sleepless nights and the many mornings they would turn on the television at 6 o'clock to see the news. All of us in the House should remember that and do all that we can to look after the families of those involved in the action.

I should like to make three points based on my experience 10 years ago. The first is the importance of maintaining a firm diplomatic alliance across many countries. Again, I pay tribute to the Government in their efforts thus far in that direction. Such an alliance is important not only in giving us moral authority but because of the effect on the service men who are called on to carry out the actions. It is worth stating once again, and always in those countries, that the war is against terrorism and not against Islam. That is particularly important in this conflict because there seem to be so many different and varying aims.

The second point that is worth making—it has been made by several Members—is that bombing alone will not solve the conflict. In the very near future, we will have to have a plan for the economic, political and humanitarian reconstruction of Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban. We have seen in a number of stages in Afghanistan's history the penalty for not doing that. It was clearly evident in the Mujaheddin era, when the people of Afghanistan felt that the Americans had let them down badly by helping them to fight the war but not reconstructing their country.

It is easy to foresee—the scenario may arise sooner than we think—the Taliban melting into the hills following a period of heavy shelling. If we are to prevent reprisals as the Northern Alliance sweep down through Kabul, we must have a plan that we are ready to implement. I believe, although I am no advocate of ground troops, that it will be impossible to influence such a situation without a presence on the ground. I urge the Government to give considerable thought to using the offices of the United Nations to bring some influence to bear on the ground once the Taliban have left. If Afghanistan is to be reconstructed and, therefore, the causes of terrorism removed, a period of political stability is crucial. Like the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Keetch), I welcome the intervention of the former king, and I hope that there will be some form of Marshall plan for Afghanistan once the bombing is over.

The third point worth mentioning is the importance of renewed momentum in the middle east peace process. I was delighted to see the Palestinian leader in London yesterday. I believe strongly that we should recognise the right of the Palestinians to a proper and viable state, while at the same time guaranteeing the security of Israel.

I have had great admiration for the state of Israel over many years. I have admiration for the courageous and determined way in which the Israelis forged a state from the wreckage of the second world war. However, they must realise now that they will lose the sympathy of the international community if they believe that the international community's desire for a world free of terrorism presents them with an opportunity to occupy more land. Therefore, I support the Government's desire to add impetus to the middle east peace process. Osama bin Laden's intervention and use of that was a repellant and deceitful hijacking. We can never hope to defeat terrorism while the middle east is in turmoil.

The international dimension is only one aspect of the problem before us. Once the immediate crisis is over, there will be considerable implications for United Kingdom defence and intelligence policy. The first, as everyone has said, will be the need to acknowledge that terrorism has presented a threat on a new scale since 11 September. The Secretary of State for Defence will need to think carefully about the configuration of the armed forces to meet that threat. I was personally involved in the last large-scale defence review, "Options for Change", and I know that much of the thinking that went into that was based on cold war calculations. The balance will have to be altered to meet the new threat. We will need a larger number of lighter forces and greater heavy lift capability. I welcome the news that we are to re-equip our carriers.

Secondly, we will need to expand our intelligence services to meet the threat. We are now in the third phase of terrorism. In the 1960s and 1970s, terrorist groups first started to appear in Europe; there was a pause in the late 1970s, when we came to terms with those groups, but they re-emerged in the 1980s. As we can see in the Provisional IRA, terrorist groups have become far more tightly organised, with active service units comprising four men. Hardly anyone outside those units knows much about them. It is that above all other developments that has caused many of the intelligence problems that face us today. We shall need to adapt our forces and our intelligence services if we are to penetrate terrorist cells in years to come.

Finally, we in this country need to reconsider establishing an integrated disaster recovery plan. I am much impressed by the apparent ease with which authorities in the United States call out the National Guard. This summer, while working with the Kent ambulance service, I was worried to learn that it cannot

*[Hugh Robertson]*

operate alongside the police or the fire service: there is no means of common operation. We need to introduce such systems and to ensure that the Territorial Army is involved.

I pay tribute to the Government for their handling of the crisis so far, but I believe strongly that the most difficult phase lies just ahead. Awkward decisions will have to be taken about the political, economic and humanitarian reconstruction of Afghanistan and the international framework within which that can be achieved. If there is one lesson that I draw from history and from personal experience it is that it is always far easier to start a conflict than to bring it to a successful conclusion.

8.33 pm

**Mr. Robert Marshall-Andrews** (Medway): There are, one perceives, three leaders in the world who believe that the bombing of Afghanistan—including the bombing of the pitiful remains of its infrastructure and the death of hundreds, perhaps thousands of civilians—is in the interests of their cause and should be a part of their strategy. Those three leaders are first, of course, the President of the United States; secondly, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and perhaps those in NATO who support him; and thirdly, Osama bin Laden himself.

No one should doubt that that psychotic international criminal knows full well—no doubt, it is part of his plan—that with every single bomb that drops on Afghan soil and every cluster bomb and bunker buster that is dropped on a defenceless enemy from 30,000 ft, we sow the dragon's teeth. As in classical mythology, from that soil will emerge not our warriors, but warriors who will fight for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda and whose numbers will multiply. Above all, they will be armed with the hatred of the United States which brought them into being. That fact is not lost on our fragile and uneasy allies and neighbours in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, who know and have said that the words and actions of the so-called coalition and America have proved collectively to be the biggest recruiting tent for terrorism since 11 September that one could possibly dread.

We began by announcing a war, first, on terrorism. That is an absurdity, as one cannot make war on an abstract noun, although it is possible to make war on most types of syntax, as has occurred since 11 September. As one cannot make war on abstract noun, we were told that we were at war with Osama bin Laden, which endows him with the precise status that he seeks. From being a criminal, he has become a warrior, and he will move on to become a martyr. Having said that we were at war, we then waged it. It is difficult to describe the black pessimism that came over people like myself and many Labour Members when we learned of the method that was going to be employed—large-scale bombing from 30,000 ft. Such bombing creates a precise equation; it removes risk from combatants in the air and imposes it on civilians on the ground.

That is precisely what we did in those dark 78 days in Kosovo, to which I shall return in a moment. The black pessimism that we all felt grew when we learned about the enlistment of the Northern Alliance. Again, the memory of Kosovo overshadowed us—something which my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway), in one of his great speeches in the House, described as the dirty dozen. We who remember Kosovo recall the poisonous embrace of the Kosovo Liberation Army. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) pointed out, it has been discovered that 90 per cent. of our heroin comes from Afghanistan, but we could have told people a long time ago that it is brokered, moved and laundered by the KLA, our friends in the south, and it always has been.

I want to say one or two things about Kosovo, which has been employed as a shining example of military intervention and success. As a rewriting of history, that is as depressing as the present war. The operation in Kosovo was a humanitarian disaster of epic proportions, largely of our own making. When the treaty of Rambouillet broke down, we decided to bomb a helpless, defenceless and mainly civilian target from 30,000 ft—the same method is being used now. After we started the bombing, we created 500,000 refugees, who were driven from Kosovo by the unleashing of the Serb army; they saw the tracer trails of aircraft and cruise missiles which passed over their heads on the way to Belgrade. The prejudice and anger of centuries was then unleashed.

While all that was happening—as the Albanians in Kosovo were the subject of a murderous assault—three tanks of the Serbian army were destroyed and we were lied to day after day about the degradation of that army. While those Albanians suffered, the largest army force mustered by the west and NATO stood on the borders in Macedonia and did precisely nothing. That is why those of us who remember Kosovo so well blanch at the idea that it is being held up as an example for the current war. We perceive that, as sure as can be, history is repeating itself and that we will see bombing for days and days from 30,000 feet while no intervention whatever is made to save those whom it is affecting.

I do not want to be entirely condemnatory and I certainly wish to be constructive. I should like to make a suggestion that I have already put to my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister on the action that we should now take, in addition to the cessation of bombing. We must create an international criminal court—a body that would be more important than the sum of its parts. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was not being disingenuous when he said that we did not have an international foreign court. Of course, we need 60 members to set up the international foreign court to which he referred and, unhappily, one of the reasons why we cannot do so is the opposition of the United States.

I am referring not to that court, however, but to one that is comparable to those that were established in The Hague in order to deal with the atrocities in the Balkans and in Arusha in order to deal with Rwanda. It is precisely that sort of court that should be set up now, so that we can signal to the world that we expect and desire a judicial end to the conflict. It is asked why Osama bin Laden should not be tried in America. I can think of a very large number of reasons why it would be highly undesirable for him to be tried by a jury in that country. There are many reasons why that could not happen, and I very much doubt that the Americans wish or hope that it does so.

However, one cannot walk two ways in a conflict such as this. We are told that the attacks were an assault not on America, but on civilisation. For what it is worth, I and many others accept that analysis, but as an assault was made on the international community, it is to that community that the criminal who is responsible should be answerable. No one would doubt that the international court should have an American president. Of course, it should also include Islamic jurists, so that we can say to the Islamic world "This man will be tried in a court of fairness and justice."

Having established the court, we must get the criminal, and I am not suggesting that that will be easy. I have known criminal courts of one sort or another for a very long time and from both sides of the fence. Nobody knows better than me how difficult it is to obtain, track down and arrest dangerous criminals. None the less, we must do it, and it will not be done by bombing civilian targets from 30,000 feet. If I were asked how we should go into Afghanistan or wherever bin Laden is and get him out—I am surprised that nobody has intervened to ask me that question—I would have to answer that I did not know. Unlike an uncomfortably large number of my colleagues, I am not a duvet or eiderdown general. My military training was cursory and utterly useless, but I accept that, as we are reliably informed, we have the finest armed forces in the world. This work is what they are for. It will be hard and there will be military casualties, but nobody begins to suggest that the task should not be undertaken. If we do not go down that road, but continue into the spring the bombing of civilians from 30,000 ft, day after day and month after month, the international support that we have will disappear like the Afghan snows. If that happens, we can stop parroting the idea that we are not at war with Islam, as Islam will be at war with us.

8.45 pm

**Patrick Mercer** (Newark): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak. I pay tribute to the short but powerful speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), but I also wish to take issue with a couple of his points.

I believe that the operation is based on intelligence. The aircraft and weapons are as precisely targeted as military technology, and the gallant men of special forces—American and probably British—on the ground will allow.

Although the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway) was excellent as usual, his emotive language, which conjures images of B52s, carpet bombing and the weapons pictured on the cover of the *Evening Standard*, such as Puff the Magic Dragon, give the impression of a campaign in which we are not involved. We are not engaged in the Vietnam war or campaigns in the Balkans; we are prosecuting a different campaign, that has been marked so far by restrained, small and targeted operations against an enemy who has been sought out by some of the best intelligence assets that have ever been deployed.

Let us consider the propaganda aspects, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude) mentioned earlier. As a former war correspondent, I hope that I can speak about that with some authority. Any dramatic footage, which will hold the public's attention, will be used mercilessly. The Taliban have not allowed western camera crews into Afghanistan by mistake. That country is hostile, the Taliban do not favour westerners, and it is difficult to travel inside Afghanistan. Many hon. Members have expressed that much better than I have. Yet television crews are being allowed in to film what is being done.

There is nothing novel about suffering, but it makes compelling television, and good copy in the newspapers and for the radio. It is a weapon that is being used against us as surely as those aircraft were used against the World Trade Centre on 11 September. Why did not we see suffering in America on 11 September? Because there were more dramatic scenes to film. There is nothing novel about watching death and carnage, but the sight of jet airliners flying into buildings is new.

It is worth remembering the extent of the casualties and why we did not see scenes of suffering. Most of those killed on 11 September died instantly; they were not available to be photographed. Their monument is the smoking ruin of the twin towers, which are mute testimony to bin Laden's random butchery.

If we engage in war, we must understand that it is a nasty business. Indeed, this war will be nasty, brutish but, I fear, not short.

I should like to discuss the idea that humanitarian aid is alien to military aims. We have heard about the three British campaigns in Afghanistan in the 19th and early 20th centuries. All were more or less failures. We have heard about the Soviet campaign in the late 20th century. However, we should consider two remarkably successful British counter-terrorist campaigns: the Malaya campaign and the little known Oman campaign. The latter was fought on the Jebel Akh'dar, largely by small numbers of special forces. However, an integral part of both campaigns was humanitarian aid.

The Americans adopted that concept for their campaigns in Vietnam—some would say that they applied it less successfully—and labelled it "hearts and minds". In "milspeak" or army speak, it has gone a stage further and is now called G5. It is an accustomed, accepted and fully understood part of the operational spectrum.

To suspend bombing—to suspend offensive operations—will make the prosecution of G5 operations difficult. No Taliban anti-aircraft gunner is likely to between a fighter or bomber and an aircraft carrying aid. To get humanitarian aid through, and to push forward the boundaries of "hearts and minds", anti-aircraft defences must be degraded. I suggest that the two things are not mutually exclusive.

Then there is the style of operations. There is talk of armchair generals. Heaven knows, I have become something like that, although I have never aspired to be a real general! The maps in the newspapers all show bin Laden's camps—al-Qaeda training areas—conveniently located around the borders of Afghanistan. Why are they there? Because that is all that our intelligence shows us. It is exceedingly difficult for even satellite imagery to get good fixes inside this hostile country; therefore, operations against the Taliban, al-Qaeda or whoever will be relatively simple around the border areas.

However, if we are serious about pursuing our enemies—if we are serious about pursuing bin Laden into his lairs—the time will come when we must establish forward operating bases deep inside Afghanistan. History

*[Patrick Mercer]*

tells us that there are three ways in which to operate inside that country: on foot, by donkey and by helicopter. If we accept that most of the operations will involve short-term, hard, quick and relatively clinical strikes, helicopters will have to be forward-based. They do not fly very far; they do not have much endurance, particularly at high altitude—operating in the mountains—and in cold weather. Any forward operating base will have to be secured not by special forces, because they are a precious asset, but by ordinary forces—in the American terminology, "grunts": the same people who fought the Vietnam war, with all the illusions that we covered earlier. That is why elements of Tenth Mountain Division are in Uzbekistan. There is nothing elite about them; they are not special forces.

It will be manpower-intensive. Securing the high ground around any airport that is taken will require infantry, supported by light support weapons and perhaps armour, but definitely helicopters. Then will come the casualties. It should be borne in mind that the campaigns conducted by this country were fought largely by indigenous forces—Sikhs and Gurkhas, troops who knew the country backwards and understood the skill and art of mountain warfare. They found it tough. The pick of Britain's regular Army found it tough. This is a new area—a completely new theatre—for American forces, and they will have a difficult time.

I return to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid-Kent (Hugh Robertson). Should the Taliban collapse, should they be shattered militarily, should their centre of gravity be destroyed, they will return to what they know best—guerrilla warfare in the mountains—and that is when they are at their most dangerous.

How ready are British troops to stand—I borrow the phrase—shoulder to shoulder with American troops? I hope they are ready. I am delighted to learn that 150 specialist reservists have been called up. That is clearly only the tip of the iceberg, but I am told that those men and women have been asked to volunteer to be compulsorily called up. When they are compulsorily called up, their jobs and livelihood are protected by law, but one or two employers are saying that this is a scam and that these people have in fact volunteered. Industrial tribunal action may be forthcoming. Reservists have not been called up in such numbers before, and there may be difficulties. I want them to be protected from that threat.

I am glad to see that something is being done about the debacle of personal insurance. A soldier currently going through the Reserve mobilisation and training centre just outside my constituency in Nottingham said, "We want to commit ourselves to our country, but we're not sure if our country wants to commit itself to us." We must not allow that to happen. As has been said, we have the finest fighting men and women in the world. We must make sure that they are prepared in the best way that we can, and I wish them godspeed.

8.56 pm

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling): It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak in what has been an interesting and thoughtful debate encompassing many different points of view. I had heard people say that there would not be much new to be said, but I have learned a lot from listening to all the points of view. I say that as one who supports the military action.

I listened especially intently to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr. Galloway). I disagree with his views, but he challenges every single one of us who supports military action to think more deeply and clearly about why we support it. This Parliament is sometimes decried as not being the debating Chamber that it once was, but the speeches that we have heard tonight, from both Government and Opposition Members, belie that. We have had an important and passionate debate on an issue that is clearly crucial to us.

I take issue with one point made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). He said that we had not seen tonight the gung-ho that had been present in previous debates. I have sat in many of the debates, and I have not noticed a gung-ho attitude, because everybody, of all points of view, has recognised the seriousness of what we are debating and the intensity of the arguments that will take place.

I support the military action, not because I want to see us bombing from 30,000 ft and forgetting about it, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Medway (Mr. Marshall-Andrews) said, but because I genuinely do not believe that we have an alternative. Following an attack on our democracy and freedom, an attack not only on the American people but on British citizens and people from many different ethnic groups, we cannot stand by and do nothing. The challenge is what we do about it. I think that the use of force, as pursued by our Government, was the only option available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin is absolutely right to make the point that Muslims in other parts of the world will point to attacks on and outrages against them that no one has done anything about. If he had visited Rwanda, he would have seen a place where horrors occurred that no one did anything about. We should use this outrage to say that whether someone is Muslim or African, or from the north, south, east or west, this marks a turning point in the international order so that one life lost in this way will not be tolerated by the international community. We must use this as an opportunity to look forward to that new order.

I see no alternative to the use of force. It gives me no pleasure to say that. I do not know anything about the armed forces, other than what I have learned from talking to people such as the hon. Member for Newark (Patrick Mercer) and others who have a much greater knowledge of the military than me. Like anyone, I am aware of some of the horrors that can be the consequence of bombing that goes wrong. I feel a responsibility, as one of those who support military action; I am sure that we all do. However, the fundamental point is that I see no alternative to the taking of military action to try to stop a repeat of what we witnessed in America a few weeks ago.

Contrary to what others have said, I believe that if we took no action, we would encourage more terrorism. That is a matter for debate between us. From my perspective, I believe that we need to take action to deter terrorism but, in taking the military option, we need to be clear about our aims in Afghanistan. Like other hon. Members, I am worried by some of the signals coming from Washington about an escalation into Iraq and other places.

In terms of Afghanistan, our aims seem to be clear: the destruction of the Taliban and the elimination of bin Laden and his network. I hope that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence will reiterate that we want the creation of a new Afghanistan where human rights and the entitlements of everyone are catered for.

Having given my support for military action, I want to say that we need to focus on the humanitarian situation, which was bad before the military strikes and is now clearly worse. In answer to my parliamentary question yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development estimated that there were now 7.5 million people inside Afghanistan who were vulnerable and in need. According to UNICEF, a fifth of those—some 1.5 million—are children under five. In neighbouring countries, a further 4 million people are in need.

We should not be blinded by those statistics. Each represents an individual: a son, a daughter, a child, a mother or a father facing starvation, drought and war. Those of us who support military action must make the loudest demands of our Government for ever more urgent action with respect to humanitarian aid. If we are to demonstrate practically to Muslims in the region and elsewhere the fact that this is not a war against Islam, it is both morally right and an essential means of maintaining the coalition that we somehow get the aid to the people who need it.

I am aware that our Government are giving millions of pounds in aid and that air drops have taken place. However, we must find other ways to deliver aid. My right hon. Friend told me yesterday that she is examining how to open new land routes into Afghanistan for aid convoys from Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. We have talked about the propaganda war. The war is being fought in front of the television cameras and there could be no more powerful image than for this country to ensure that its humanitarian effort is second to none. Some people have called for a pause in the bombing. Others have called for other action. I do not know what would be the best approach, but we must do everything that we can.

I have two final points. First, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will say something about the continuing need to reassure our own people about any risks that they face. I am sure that all hon. Members have had such issues raised with them. Secondly, the international coalition that has been put together to fight terrorism must be maintained when the conflict is over. If we can bring so much energy and passion to fighting the situation in Afghanistan, we should bring the same amount to tackling the broader problems of poverty and conflict in many other regions. If we do that, some good will come from this particular bad.

9.7 pm

**Mr. Bernard Jenkin** (North Essex): I echo the call by the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) for us to set our sights on a new Afghanistan. I shall deal later in my speech with his comments about aid being the way to demonstrate that we are not at war with Islam. First, however, I shall deal with the question of civilian casualties, which has—rightly—been raised many times in the debate as a matter of concern.

There is no language that can express what we should say and feel about civilians who are killed, injured or bereaved by our bombs and missiles. That is one reason why the word "war" is the only way in which to describe what it is that we are doing. I am sure that the Secretary of State will wish to reiterate how every care is being taken to avoid civilian casualties. The House should be reminded that the operation has, so far, been extremely limited, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Patrick Mercer) pointed out. It is not remotely as intensive as the bombing campaign undertaken in Kosovo two years ago. Incidentally, in that campaign, as the Foreign Secretary pointed out, the western powers intervened in support of Muslims under attack from their non-Muslim oppressors.

We must, of course, do all we can to minimise civilian casualties. I do not say that they are inevitable, but even with advanced precision weaponry it would be foolish to think that bombing operations could be carried out without risk, as was pointed out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude) and by the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell). Therefore, we must not allow the possibility of civilian casualties to divert us from our main aim. We know that the Taliban Government will use every conceivable opportunity to maximise the propaganda value of civilian casualties in order to achieve exactly that. The regime that drove its tanks over the televisions it found in people's homes now invites the media in to see only what it wants them to see, while still concealing how much persecution, torture and death it was inflicting on its own people long before 11 September. The Taliban regime all but banned the world's media from its soil before 11 September, but its members have been remarkable converts to the television age in recent days. It is a regime whose soldiers have literally butchered civilians in the streets. It is a regime that has skinned its opponents, and executed women by gunfire in a football stadium that was, ironically, donated by the international community. In that same stadium, men have been strung up from the goalposts to die.

Amnesty International compiled a report into the foul deeds of the Taliban regime. It included reports of women having their hands cut off for wearing nail varnish, and being beaten for showing their faces in public or for trying to learn English. For every Afghan mourning the few deaths that we may have caused—and no one shirks that responsibility—there are thousands more hoping and praying that the sounds of British and American aircraft, bombs and missiles will herald the end of their nightmare by ending the Taliban oppression of the Afghan peoples.

The Taliban claim that one alleged allied mistake killed 200 people. There is every indication that that is the grossest exaggeration. Five weeks after 11 September, thousands of our civilian casualties still lie under the rubble of the World Trade Centre. What concern have the Taliban expressed for them?

From the very beginning, the Prime Minister has said that the conflict would be a long haul, and that it would be hard. So it is proving to be. I therefore start with a plea to all those who, like the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Dr. Tonge), have urged a halt to the campaign, or some sort of ceasefire. My plea is that we should make such decisions about the future conduct of a war against terrorism on the basis of what we know to be true, not on the basis of what we would like to be true.

I shall list the fundamental facts. First, the Taliban had every opportunity to cease their support for terrorism in the weeks before the bombing began. Secondly, the Taliban

*[Mr. Geoffrey Hoon]*

The House has consistently supported our armed forces, particularly when the Government have taken the difficult decision to deploy them on operations. I want to thank all right hon. and hon. Members for their many kind words about our service men and women. We ask an enormous amount of our armed forces. Their performance over the last few days and weeks, as part of the global effort to counter international terrorism, is further proof of their abilities. Our armed forces are, without doubt, among the best in the world. I know that the House will join me in offering them our full support.

I make no apology for repeating my commitment to the families of service personnel. It is not easy for them when their close relatives deploy overseas on operations. We value the enormous contribution that they make to the United Kingdom's defence community. I was particularly grateful to the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid-Kent (Hugh Robertson) for the personal observations that he made on that subject.

I also thank the House and the country at large for their support for the actions that we are taking. Sometimes, we are faced by critical events that unite us—a point well made by the shadow Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), earlier in the debate. The attacks of 11 September and their aftermath are one example of such a situation. This support, from Members of Parliament and members of the public alike, means a great deal to our armed forces. On their behalf, let me say that I am grateful for it and for the spirit in which it has been offered.

In the light of the observations made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), I emphasise that we will not take for granted the support of the House. Indeed, that is why we have already held four debates on this vital subject, in which all Members have had opportunities to set out their views.

**Mr. Salmond:** Is the Secretary of State able to confirm or deny the reports in later editions of the *Evening Standard* this evening that, following the discussions that Colin Powell has held in Pakistan, there is a suggestion of a deadline of 17 November—the onset of Ramadan—for the bombing phase of the military action?

**Mr. Hoon:** I have not seen the late editions of that newspaper, and I am not aware of any particular deadline. I shall deal with some of the military strategy in due course, but I think it highly unlikely that that report is accurate.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has explained that our strategy in response to the events of 11 September contains a number of different elements, embracing action in the diplomatic, humanitarian, economic, legal and military spheres. Our immediate aims have been stated clearly. First, we want to bring those guilty of perpetrating the attacks on 11 September to account. Secondly, we want to ensure that Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network are never able to pose a terrorist threat again. Thirdly, we want to ensure that Afghanistan no longer harbours and sustains international terrorism or terrorists. Assuming that the Taliban regime fails to comply with those perfectly proper and legitimate requests, we require a sufficient change in the leadership in Afghanistan to ensure that that country's links with international terrorism are broken and that its support for international terrorism is ended.

Those aims are set out in the paper that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has placed in the Library. In response to a question asked by the hon. Member for North Essex, I assure the House that those aims are entirely consistent with those set out by the United States. I recognise that the objectives are ambitious, but they are necessary, and with our allies and partners, we will achieve them. That will not be easy; it will certainly take time, but we will succeed.

The continuous military action by the coalition will play an important part—but only a part—in achieving those objectives. We have three clear military goals: to destroy the terrorist camps; to pressure the Taliban regime into ending its support for Osama bin Laden; and to create the right conditions for future operations in Afghanistan so that that pressure is sustained for as long as it is required.

**Mr. Dalyell:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development stated in public on the radio that every target was approved by a Law Officer. I do not know the answer to this question, but is every target approved by a Law Officer?

**Mr. Hoon:** I believe that my right hon. Friend actually said that every target was approved on advice from the Law Officers. My hon. Friend understands the fast-moving nature of military actions—he has considerably more experience of them than I am ever likely to have—so I am sure that he will appreciate that legal advice cannot always be given precisely before any particular attack takes place. Therefore, the general practice has always been to ensure that all targets conform to international law and, indeed, national law. That is our practice in relation to the current operations, and that will continue to be the case.

I have set out our military goals, and our justification for pursuing them is very well known. The atrocities of the 11 September may have taken place overseas, but they still represent the largest ever single loss of British lives through terrorism. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has set out for the House the conclusions that we have reached about who was responsible. Those conclusions have convinced Governments around the world of the guilt of Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network. We are now taking proportionate action in self-defence, in accordance with international law, as I have said, to protect our citizens and, indeed, those of other countries.

This is a very different kind of conflict from those that we have fought in the past. It is not a classical military campaign. Our enemy is a not a standing army, such as the one that we faced in the Gulf conflict or, more recently, in Kosovo.

In Kosovo, it was necessary to render the significant Serbian military machine incapable of continuing to massacre innocent civilians. NATO took military action to prevent an overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe. Despite what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Medway (Mr. Marshall-Andrews) said about the situation in Kosovo, I have been there several times in different ministerial roles and hundreds of thousands of refugees

are back in their homes and jobs. Indeed, in my most recent visit to Pristina I saw signs of growing prosperity, which after my first visit I would have found remarkable. That is a tribute to the military campaign that was undertaken on behalf of the refugees to enable them to return to their homes.

However, this time we need to operate in different ways. The phasing, tempo and scale of our operations will differ markedly from how we would act against a conventional opponent. Already we can see that this campaign is very different. The coalition has attacked many targets in the past nine days. They are much smaller than they were in Kosovo and there are not so many of them. We struck more than twice as many targets in the first 10 days of the Kosovo campaign than we have attacked in Afghanistan despite the appalling weather that we faced in Kosovo. The targets now are not as obvious. In contrast to the Taliban, the Serbian military machine was a formidable opponent and considerable effort was needed to degrade its military capability so that we could operate safely. This time it is different. The Taliban are not a significant military power, but rather one that has persistently supported international terrorism.

We have committed ourselves for the long haul so that we achieve our objectives, however long it takes. The military element of our strategy against international terrorism may take some time. Of course, the precise length and shape of the military campaign will depend on how we can best achieve our objectives.

Military operations will not necessarily continue at their current level. Their tempo will fluctuate: they may slow or intensify; they may even appear to stop. Everything will depend on our analysis of how we can best meet the military objectives and how those contribute to the broad front of pressure that is being applied to the Taliban regime.

Military operations do not need to be confined to air strikes. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on 11 October, we have always been aware that we may have to back up air strikes with other forms of proportionate and targeted action. That could include the use of ground forces. A number of options are being considered and we have not taken any final decisions. When we do, we will, of course, keep the House fully informed, not least because we will have to face up to the risk of casualties of our own. We have to recognise that that is a real possibility. We will obviously work to minimise those risks, but we cannot eliminate them entirely. The decision to deploy our armed forces on ground operations is never taken lightly, but such is the gravity of the threat posed by terrorism that we may ultimately have no choice.

On the details of the campaign, I shall set out the extent to which we have achieved the military aims to which I referred earlier. So far, the coalition has attacked more than 60 different military targets. I emphasise that we have addressed exclusively military targets. Our targets have been terrorist training camps, the Taliban's military infrastructure and, in particular, their early warning and air defence capabilities. Those include military command and control sites, early warning radars, airfields, surface-to-air missile sites, military aircraft, military garrisons and military and maintenance sites, all of which are military targets. Not a single civilian infrastructure target—if that was the phrase used by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Medway—has been attacked deliberately by the coalition.

**Mr. Blizzard:** In light of that detail, does my right hon. Friend share my concern that the media sometimes reduce such facts to a shorthand version of "Kabul was pounded tonight", which is different from what he has outlined?

**Mr. Hoon:** That is right. We all understand why those accounts appear in our newspapers. They are graphic details of what are often complex military operations involving a range of different aircraft and weapons.

I shall try to set out the operations that are being conducted and their consequences.

We have not yet achieved all our objectives. We certainly believe that al-Qaeda's capacity to train terrorists has been hit, and hit very hard. We have attacked nine of its camps. Many of them have been put beyond use; others have been very badly damaged.

Real damage has been done to elements of the Taliban regime's military capability. That is essential if we are to end their support for Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network. The Taliban's military command and control facilities have been hit, their early warning and air defence systems lie in ruins, radars have been destroyed, surface-to-air missile sites have been smashed. Their ability to sustain their forces effectively has, we believe, been very severely degraded.

**Mr. Jenkin:** Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Patrick Mercer) and I raised: the campaign is very much less intensive than that undertaken in Kosovo? To echo the point made by the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Blizzard), very large areas of Afghanistan will remain unaware of any military action—unlike what happened in Kosovo. We can therefore emphasise how surgically directed the campaign is.

**Mr. Hoon:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. As I said, in the first 10 days of the Kosovo campaign, notwithstanding some pretty poor weather conditions, more than twice as many targets were attacked as in the campaign in Afghanistan. The hon. Gentleman is right that, what evidence there is about the situation on the ground in Afghanistan suggests that life is going on comparatively normally. I very recently saw some footage on public television of the day after the pounding that our newspapers allege Kabul has been given, in which market stalls in the centre of the city were selling food, clothing and other items which they presumably sell routinely, day in and day out. That would tend to suggest that the targets that have been attacked have been attacked very precisely and strategically, and have not caused the kind of damage to the civilian population that some, even in these debates, have suggested.

**Mr. Galloway:** How surgical a weapon is the B52? Which weapons hit the Red Cross building today, killed the four United Nations workers on the first day and hit the village of Khorum, which the British and western media filmed the other day?

**Mr. Hoon:** B52s drop weapons; they are not weapons in their own right—unlike civilian aircraft that are flown

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into buildings and used as weapons. We are relying on the precision of the weapons that are dropped from the B52 to hit the targets accurately. In due course, I shall deal with each of my hon. Friend's points and hope to satisfy him as best I can of the details of the allegations that he is repeating.

**Mr. Tom Levitt** (High Peak): Will my right hon. Friend address the concerns that one or two of my constituents have expressed to me about the dropping of food to people in Afghanistan? Will he confirm that the areas where food is being dropped are not also the places that are being bombed?

**Mr. Hoon:** That is so, although we all recognise that more work must be done to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the areas where it is most needed. The United States has deployed a number of transport aircraft to drop food packages mainly where we know that there are significant numbers of refugees who had intended to cross what is now a closed border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. As I said at the start of my comments, the more information we are able to glean from photo-reconnaissance, the more we shall be able to target humanitarian aid accurately where it is most needed.

We have gone a long way towards creating the right conditions for future operations in Afghanistan, to maintain the pressure on the Taliban regime. We have attacked nine airfields. The vast majority have had their operational capability degraded or destroyed. The bulk of the Taliban's limited air force—its fighters, helicopters, and transport aircraft—have been reduced to wreckage. The threat posed by the Taliban air force is now negligible. Certainly, we have achieved air supremacy at medium and high levels over Afghanistan.

Yet we know that camps can be rebuilt, radars replaced and runways repaired. We must ensure that terrorists cannot use them again and that coalition forces can operate with the greatest possible freedom and safety. Repeated strikes on the same targets are therefore sometimes necessary. That does not indicate failure, but shows how thorough and determined we are in achieving our objectives.

I realise that there are concerns about the targets of the air strikes. I emphasise again that our targets are terrorist and military installations. The targeting processes are rigorous, involving the Law Officers—which answers the point raised again by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow. A great deal of effort is spent on both sides of the Atlantic examining the targets carefully to ensure that we minimise as far as possible any risk of civilian casualties.

**Syd Rapson** (Portsmouth, North): Is there hard evidence that the Taliban are collecting civilians to pack around potential target sites and so give rise to bad press coverage, or that they are using Red Cross areas to hide fuel dumps and so on?

**Mr. Hoon:** I shall deal with the Red Cross point shortly. I have no specific evidence of efforts by the Taliban to use human shields, but I do not entirely trust the efforts that they have so far made to explain to the world the nature of the civilian casualties that they claim to have suffered. I shall deal with that point in more detail later.

I emphasise once again that we have no quarrel whatever with the people of Afghanistan. Enormous efforts are made to minimise civilian casualties and avoid exposing civilians to unnecessary risk. However, as speakers in the debate have rightly observed, the possibility of accidents and errors can never be entirely eliminated. Fortunately such incidents are rare, but there is always the chance that something will go wrong, however much care is taken. I greatly regret the deaths of any civilians who may have been killed in the air strikes, including those of four United Nations workers who died last week.

I am aware of the reports that civilians have been killed in coalition strikes on the village of Khorum. My United States counterpart, Secretary of State for Defence Donald Rumsfeld, explained yesterday that there were good indications that it was a confirmed military target. The chairman of the United States joint chiefs of staff, General Richard Myers, indicated that the actual targets were caves containing military hardware that made them entirely legitimate military targets.

The caves were hit very precisely. We are aware that following the strikes on the caves, serious explosions occurred—far more serious than could have been caused by the weapon that initially struck the caves. That clearly indicated that the caves were being used to store high explosives, weapons and munitions. The consequential series of explosions clearly demonstrated that the caves were a perfectly legitimate and appropriate military target.

**Vernon Coaker:** It is important that my right hon. Friend gives the true facts about events in Afghanistan. Will he confirm that we are dropping leaflets and that we are continuing to do all we can to use the BBC World Service to broadcast into Afghanistan, so that we can tell the people of Afghanistan about the situation from our perspective and explain our aims and objectives?

**Mr. Hoon:** I confirm that there have been leaflet drops. I also confirm that excellent work is being done by the World Service. What is most important about the World Service's work is that it operates entirely independently of the Government and explains events in a completely objective way. Those in government who from time to time are criticised by the World Service recognise its independence and objectivity.

Reports and allegations have come in today, including one that five civilians have been killed in a Kabul hospital. All I can say in response to such allegations is that there were no known hospitals close to the sites in Kabul that were targeted by air strikes last night. Immediately on hearing of the allegations, we began investigations, as is standard practice following any suggestion that civilian casualties have occurred.

I shall deal with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Ms King) about a warehouse used by the International Committee of the Red Cross and suggestions that it had been damaged. Fortunately, it appears that no one has been killed. The Red Cross has confirmed that no food stocks were damaged. The details of the incident are still sketchy and no specific battle damage assessment is yet available, but

we believe that the warehouse was part of a larger complex near Kabul airport that was being used by the Taliban. That may deal with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Dr. Tonge); there seems to be a more than significant degree of control by the Taliban regime over supplies of humanitarian assistance going into Afghanistan. Indeed, that has certainly been used by the regime in the past to continue its control over the people of Afghanistan, which is obviously a matter of great regret.

I repeat that we will continue to investigate any claims of civilian casualties very carefully. In fact, it is almost impossible to obtain any independent evidence against which we can judge such allegations. So far, only once have the Taliban regime allowed independent journalists into Afghanistan to investigate such claims. From what I have read of their accounts, those journalists were extremely doubtful about the veracity of what they saw; some certainly felt that incidents had been manufactured for their benefit.

On the subject of the media, the hon. Member for Vale of York (Miss McIntosh) raised yesterday's meeting between a number of broadcasters and the director of communications and strategy at No. 10 Downing street. I think that I should deal with that, as the hon. Lady specifically raised it. The events of 11 September make these exceptional times. A number of issues have arisen in the last two weeks, including media reporting of the Prime Minister's travel plans, videos of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda members being shown on television, and the Taliban's invitation to selected journalists to visit a village in Afghanistan. It was felt, and the broadcasters agreed, that it would be sensible to sit down and talk those things through. The Government were able to flag up some of their concerns, particularly relating to security issues, which was welcomed by both sides. Let me repeat the Government's appreciation for the way in which the broadcasters have gone about an extraordinarily difficult job in recent weeks.

**Miss McIntosh:** May I make a separate point about coded messages, as perhaps I did not express myself as clearly as I might have done earlier? Is the Defence Secretary at liberty to tell the House what action can be taken to prevent such inadvertent activity?

**Mr. Hoon:** I recognise the extreme difficulty of identifying coded messages. We have no idea of the form that they might take. That concern was raised initially in the United States and obviously we must take account of any continuing anxiety. I do not have specific evidence of any such messages; I simply repeat the points that I made about the meeting that has taken place.

**Mr. Salmond:** Is the Secretary of State seriously saying that coded messages could be given in edited highlights of an interview broadcast on the BBC or ITN, as opposed to the internet, cable or satellite television or, for that matter, the personal columns of *The Times*? Is he seriously maintaining that that was the reason for calling in the broadcasters?

**Mr. Hoon:** I am suggesting that that is a possibility. I am not setting any great store by it, for the precise reasons given by the hon. Gentleman. Clearly we do not know if there is any code in such tapes and where any such code might occur, so I recognise that that is not the strongest possibility. Nevertheless, it remains a possibility, and I put it no stronger than that.

**Mr. Dismore:** If those coded messages are going out, to whom does my right hon. Friend think they are addressed? Earlier tonight, I expressed concerns about certain fundamentalist organisations. Will my right hon. Friend comment on whether or not action can be taken, for example in relation to al-Muhajiroun and the Supporters of Sharia?

**Mr. Hoon:** Certainly, there is no doubt that the actions of those who spent a considerable time in the United States waiting to commit the atrocities of 11 September were triggered by some event or other. We do not know whether the signal was a coded message contained in a video, or the death of Masood, or whether—I am thinking in terms of what the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) wryly suggested—an advertisement was placed in the personal column of *The New York Times*. We may never find out about the trigger for the terrorists' actions. The answer to my hon. Friend's question is that we must obviously be concerned about whether people are waiting to take similarly appalling action anywhere in the world. That proper concern was expressed in the course of the meeting to which I referred.

The coalition's actions have widespread international support. The world was shocked and disgusted by what happened on 11 September. Countries around the world have gone far beyond simple expressions of sympathy about what happened. The United Kingdom may have been the first country to deploy its forces alongside those of the United States, but it will not be the only one.

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Some hon. Members have just returned from a two-day visit to Brussels by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. We met ambassadors from NATO and other EU member states. First, a huge amount of gratitude was expressed, especially by the Americans, for the fact that article 5 of the treaty was implemented within 24 hours. Secondly, there was concern about the long-term consideration of what will happen if we create large numbers of refugees. I would be especially interested to know whether any action will be taken in the immediate future to support Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

**Mr. Hoon:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary dealt in his speech with the question of refugees and humanitarian assistance. We have emphasised that that is every bit as important as the military action that we are now undertaking. It is vital for the future of the coalition and its operations, as well as for the future of Afghanistan, that we take action to protect the millions of people who were in very great difficulty even before 11 September. It is obviously important that we deal with that task.

NATO has now deployed the Standing Naval Force Mediterranean, a multinational force that is currently under British command, to the eastern Mediterranean, where it stands ready to engage in force protection of high-value assets. Five NATO airborne early warning aircraft, crewed by air force personnel drawn from across NATO's allies, have been deployed to the eastern United States, thereby permitting that country to deploy its own early warning aircraft abroad for operations over

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Afghanistan. They are piloted not only by British or American personnel, but people from a wide range of nationalities and from different NATO countries. A real and practical contribution is therefore being made both at sea and in the air by NATO and its personnel and equipment.

The countries in the coalition have friends throughout the international community. We are talking frequently to our French and German counterparts. They have offered important capabilities as their contribution to the coalition that was formed in response to the events of 11 September, and so have other allies, including Italy, Spain, Portugal, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Still more nations have contributed intelligence on the terrorists, arrested suspects or permitted basing or overflight rights to coalition forces.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. MacDonald) recognises that that action is part of the collective European effort that he seeks. A very determined effort is being made by European allies and partners to ensure that they play their part in confronting international terrorism. Indeed, I saw much of that support at first hand during my visits last week to Moscow and to an informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers in Brussels on Friday. All these expressions of support are important and valuable. I suspect that the frustration of my ministerial colleagues from other European nations—if I may speak for a moment on their behalf—is that their desire to become involved in military operations has not always so far been fulfilled simply because of the pace of the operations and the nature of the equipment that is currently being used. As I said, however, there are options that may subsequently involve them.

**Mr. Ian Davidson** (Glasgow, Pollok): If British forces are in action, they are likely to be threatened by weapons that were provided by the United States. In view of that fact, and if we are intent upon building a wide coalition, will my right hon. Friend ensure that we involve only those people with whom we want to have relationships in future?

**Mr. Hoon:** Of course that is the case. The range and breadth of the international community's response is further proof of the sort of commitment that we need. We need to concentrate on building and rebuilding that coalition and on making sure that we can take appropriate action across the range of Government activities to achieve our ends.

*It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

## Pensions Clawback

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ainger.]*

10 pm

**Linda Perham** (Ilford, North): I am very pleased to have secured the debate this evening. Although it takes place when the country is rightly focusing on other matters, the subject is most important. The little known issue of clawback reflects on our treatment of our pensioners. Many of them, like my parents, are of the generation that fought in or lived through the second world war.

I was first elected to Parliament a few weeks before my 50th birthday and was promptly approached by Age Concern, which assisted me in drafting my private Member's Bill on age discrimination. Since then, I have been closely involved with issues that affect people in their later years, and I am the secretary of the all-party group on ageing and older people. My constituency has about 18,000 pensioners, who are ably championed by the Redbridge Pensioners Action Association. I therefore have an obvious interest in challenging the inequitable practice of pension clawback.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Pollard), who supports me in the Chamber tonight and has campaigned on the issue for several years. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Minister, who will reply to the debate. I know that he is aware of the issue, and he has helpfully agreed to meet my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans and a small delegation in the near future.

Pension clawback operates to the detriment of millions of pensioners, yet, as far as I know, it has not been debated in the Chamber before tonight. I want to raise the anxieties that, I believe, the 137 colleagues who signed my early-day motion, tabled on 8 February 2001, wish the Government to consider seriously.

Clawback is officially known as pension integration or abatement. It means a reduction in retired people's company pension simply because they receive a state pension. Employers can—and all too often do—deduct a sum every week up to the amount of a single person's basic state pension from the occupational pension that the former employee receives. Even those who are not entitled to a full state pension can find their company pension reduced by anything up to £72.50 per week.

That means that hundreds of thousands of pensioners lose significant sums every year. How can that be justified? An obscure legal loophole under the National Insurance Act 1946 allows companies to take account of state retirement benefits when paying retired employees a company pension. In most cases, an amount equivalent to the current value of the basic state pension or the lower earnings limit is deducted; in other words £3,770 a year for a single person from April 2001.

I understand that Inland Revenue rules allow retired workers to claim both a state pension and a full occupational pension without any clawback. It is therefore by no means obligatory for companies to operate clawback. Indeed, its existence works against the interests of the Inland Revenue. Pensions, whether provided by the state or occupational schemes, are treated as taxable income. If those pensioners received their full and rightful

amount, not only they but the Exchequer would be better off. Pensioners would have more income and would therefore pay more tax.

Why should the taxpayer subsidise the pension funds of cash-rich companies that operate pension clawback? Why should the Government be deprived of millions of pounds which could be better spent on health, education and other public services?

**Mr. Kerry Pollard** (St. Albans): As well as paying tax, some people on low occupational pensions would be able to claim benefits. If clawback were abolished, would not the Exchequer benefit substantially from the reduction in the number of housing benefit and other claimants?

**Linda Perham:** That is an important contribution to my argument.

There is also the argument that those whose pensions are clawed back make lower contributions throughout their working lives. In the case of non-contributory pension schemes, however, that benefits only the employer. Regardless of any benefits to the employer, is the welfare of future pensioners so secure that employers may discourage people from making maximum provision for their retirement years?

Employees are free to make additional voluntary contributions, but evidence suggests that employers do not specifically make it clear that the deduction will be made. Even so, when the Government's pension forecast statement is rolled out across the country, which I shall welcome, we may see some improvement, as we hope employees will, for the first time. We hope that employees will be able to see clearly what they will receive on their retirement.

The operation of pension clawback is widespread. According to figures produced by the National Association of Pension Funds, it is estimated that up to 2.5 million pensioners across the United Kingdom are affected by pension clawback. Four out of 10 schemes in the private sector operate the practice, compared with only 6 per cent. of public sector schemes.

Of course, those hardest hit by clawback are not people with large occupational pensions, but people who were low paid and part time when in employment. Unfortunately, it is not just grasping Gradgrinds who are exploiting the legal loophole; penalised pensioners come from a wide range of sectors of the economy. In the financial services industry, they include tens of thousands of staff at banks and other financial institutions. It is only right to note that some employers have never operated pension clawback, while others, to their credit—for example Shell, BP Amoco and the Bank of England—have ended the practice within the last few years.

The *Daily Mail*—which, in 1998, took up the campaign spearheaded by UNIFI, the trade union representing employees in the financial services industry, and my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans—reported in June 2000 that BP Amoco had abolished clawback for its 35,000 pensioners at a cost of £6 million, that Shell was cutting the amount of pension clawback for eight out of 10 of its 21,000 pensioners, and that Nestle had halved the amount that it deducted.

UNIFI has argued tirelessly that this practice is unfair, discriminatory and unnecessary, and that it costs the taxpayer and the Inland Revenue millions of pounds a year in lost revenue. I am grateful to UNIFI for its assistance in furnishing me with information about the issue. I first became aware of it when my constituent Mrs. Engleback visited me at my surgery last December, and I have since been contacted by a number of affected pensioners from other parts of the country.

UNIFI's campaign has also attracted the support of the TUC. John Monks spoke at a packed rally of pensioners last February. But this is not merely a matter for collective bargaining between employers and trade unions; it is, I believe, a moral and legal issue. The Government should consider what can be done to close the legal loophole to ensure that the practice does not continue.

Clawback is morally offensive because it is unfair. Why should staff who have been paying into their pensions for years not receive their full entitlement? It affects the poorest pensioners the most. A clawback of, say, £1,300 a year may not make an appreciable dent in an annual pension of £50,000, but it can cause real difficulty for someone receiving £5,000 a year. It is also discriminatory, and contributes to the pay gap between men and women. Clawback applies only to final salary schemes. Money purchase schemes are not affected. Women, generally leaving on lower salaries and therefore entitled to lower pensions, suffer the most. My constituent Mrs. Engleback has also asked whether this discriminatory practice is illegal under European Union law.

This Government have consistently attacked discrimination against women and put in place measures to improve women's lives. In particular, the pensioners' minimum income guarantee can rightly be praised for redressing an injustice against women. Last year, the then Secretary of State for Social Security, my right hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), said of the minimum income guarantee:

"The changes that we are making will be of particular advantage to women, because on average, women have smaller occupational pensions than men, and of course they are likely to live longer."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 2000; Vol. 356, c. 453.]

Many clawback companies, and banks in particular, have announced record profits over the years—some as much as £32 billion a year. Do they really need to hoard former employees' pension money as well?

Trade unions can and do achieve notable successes through negotiations with individual employers, but they need and deserve assistance from legislators. Pressure from hon. Members who join individual campaigns can have a decisive impact, but I believe that we can do more.

A Bill was recently introduced in Ireland, with the full support of the Irish Government, freezing the amount deducted by clawback at the 1998 rate, ensuring that it cannot rise in line with state pension increases. Over time, that will lead to the phasing out of this unfair practice. I would like the Government to review the whole issue of clawback and consider what they can do, drawing on the Irish experience as appropriate.

**Mr. Pollard:** Is my hon. Friend aware that I recently met the Irish pensions Minister, who told me that the Irish Government wanted to signal to employers that they should scrap clawback, and that the Bill in question is just two pages in length?

**Linda Perham:** I was indeed aware of that. It is important to consider what has been done in other

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Afghanistan. They are piloted not only by British or American personnel, but people from a wide range of nationalities and from different NATO countries. A real and practical contribution is therefore being made both at sea and in the air by NATO and its personnel and equipment.

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The *Daily Mail*—which, in 1998, took up the campaign spearheaded by UNIFI, the trade union representing employees in the financial services industry, and my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans—reported in June 2000 that BP Amoco had abolished clawback for its 35,000 pensioners at a cost of £6 million, that Shell was cutting the amount of pension clawback for eight out of 10 of its 21,000 pensioners, and that Nestle had halved the amount that it deducted.

UNIFI has argued tirelessly that this practice is unfair, discriminatory and unnecessary, and that it costs the taxpayer and the Inland Revenue millions of pounds a year in lost revenue. I am grateful to UNIFI for its assistance in furnishing me with information about the issue. I first became aware of it when my constituent Mrs. Engleback visited me at my surgery last December, and I have since been contacted by a number of affected pensioners from other parts of the country.

UNIFI's campaign has also attracted the support of the TUC. John Monks spoke at a packed rally of pensioners last February. But this is not merely a matter for collective bargaining between employers and trade unions; it is, I believe, a moral and legal issue. The Government should consider what can be done to close the legal loophole to ensure that the practice does not continue.

Clawback is morally offensive because it is unfair. Why should staff who have been paying into their pensions for years not receive their full entitlement? It affects the poorest pensioners the most. A clawback of, say, £1,300 a year may not make an appreciable dent in an annual pension of £50,000, but it can cause real difficulty for someone receiving £5,000 a year. It is also discriminatory, and contributes to the pay gap between men and women. Clawback applies only to final salary schemes. Money purchase schemes are not affected. Women, generally leaving on lower salaries and therefore entitled to lower pensions, suffer the most. My constituent Mrs. Engleback has also asked whether this discriminatory practice is illegal under European Union law.

This Government have consistently attacked discrimination against women and put in place measures to improve women's lives. In particular, the pensioners' minimum income guarantee can rightly be praised for redressing an injustice against women. Last year, the then Secretary of State for Social Security, my right hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), said of the minimum income guarantee:

> "The changes that we are making will be of particular advantage to women, because on average, women have smaller occupational pensions than men, and of course they are likely to live longer."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 2000; Vol. 356, c. 453.]

Many clawback companies, and banks in particular, have announced record profits over the years—some as much as £32 billion a year. Do they really need to hoard former employees' pension money as well?

Trade unions can and do achieve notable successes through negotiations with individual employers, but they need and deserve assistance from legislators. Pressure from hon. Members who join individual campaigns can have a decisive impact, but I believe that we can do more.

A Bill was recently introduced in Ireland, with the full support of the Irish Government, freezing the amount deducted by clawback at the 1998 rate, ensuring that it cannot rise in line with state pension increases. Over time, that will lead to the phasing out of this unfair practice. I would like the Government to review the whole issue of clawback and consider what they can do, drawing on the Irish experience as appropriate.

**Mr. Pollard:** Is my hon. Friend aware that I recently met the Irish pensions Minister, who told me that the Irish Government wanted to signal to employers that they should scrap clawback, and that the Bill in question is just two pages in length?

**Linda Perham:** I was indeed aware of that. It is important to consider what has been done in other

*[Linda Perham]*

countries, and especially Ireland, and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for pursuing this matter. He started campaigning more than three years ago, and I am grateful that I am able to carry the debate forward.

It would be helpful if the Government could indicate that they agree in principle with the hon. Members who signed my early-day motion, as well as the 200 who signed the one that my hon. Friend tabled in a previous Session, which states that clawback is unfair and discriminatory, as well as a burden on taxpayers.

After a lifetime of paying into their company pension scheme, former employees should be looking forward to a peaceful, well-earned retirement. Because of clawback, pension payments are reduced, leading to real resentment and hardship. It is time that the injustice of clawback was more widely recognised. It is time that the Government took a serious look at how they can help those who have provided for their retirement yet find their pensions raided and their incomes slashed.

10.13 pm

**The Minister for Pensions (Mr. Ian McCartney):** Good evening, Mr. Speaker. In the many years in which I have addressed the House from the Government or Opposition Front Bench, I have never known a Speaker do us the honour of coming to listen to an Adjournment debate. I hope that I live up to your expectations.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Linda Perham) for highlighting this issue. It is true that she has been campaigning on it for some time. I will indeed meet my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Pollard) on 6 November, and I invite my hon. Friend to attend, too, if she wants.

I will try to answer in general terms as well as responding to some specific questions, but if I am unable to give full answers tonight, I assure my hon. Friends that I will place letters in the Library, so that the other 137 hon. Members who signed the early-day motion can have a full picture of our debate.

Many people are members of integrated pension schemes, and I know that feelings run high when pensions are offset by basic state retirement pension. The Government feel strongly that it is important for all pensioners to have a decent and secure income in retirement. Occupational pensions are an excellent way of providing for this. The Government are keen to encourage both the provision and membership of private pension schemes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North asked about potential discrimination against part-time workers, who are mainly women. The directive on part-time workers was implemented in April 2001, when I was Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry. To comply with it, schemes operating integration will need to ensure that the way in which they do so does not discriminate between part-time and full-time employees. I hope that that answers her point.

We must bear it in mind that employers do not have to provide occupational pension schemes for their employees. The costs of running a pension scheme are part of the overall remuneration package that a company offers. All pension schemes vary in the structure of the benefits that they provide. The level of benefits of course affects the cost of providing them. Because of this, the employer must make the decision of how and when integration should be abolished. If employers were forced to change their schemes overnight and remove clawback rules, many of them might decide that they could no longer afford to provide a scheme at all. An integrated scheme is surely better than no occupational pension at all.

It is true that the practice of taking account of basic state pension goes back a long way. It started when national insurance contributions and state retirement pensions were introduced in 1948. At the time, a number of employers who offered occupational pension schemes felt that there was some duplication between the two types of provision.

With the aim of reducing contribution costs for employers and employees alike, some defined benefit schemes were adjusted to take account of some or all of the state retirement pension when calculating the occupational pension payable. That aimed at providing, overall, the same level of benefits. Although the aims of integration are clear, the result is that the occupational pension can be reduced to a level lower than that expected by the scheme member. It is important that employees fully understand the pension benefits that they can expect from their scheme at retirement.

The Government place great importance on the provision of good, clear information, enabling individuals to make adequate provision for their retirement. All schemes are required by law to provide every member with basic information about the scheme, either before they join or shortly after. That information must include an explanation of contribution and benefit rates that includes how benefits are calculated. Members must be informed of changes in scheme rules that affect benefit rates. In addition, scheme members can ask for a benefit statement every year that gives a projection of their entitlement. Most schemes provide these statements automatically.

The Government have built on that scheme. A pilot scheme has been running for almost two years for new-style combined pension forecasts. The forecasts are clear and understandable and give details of both state and occupational pension entitlement. The pilot scheme for these new-style statements is now in its second year and has been a resounding success. We will make a statement tomorrow, announcing the second phase, in which we start recruiting companies to participate with the Government in the hope that, between 2005 and 2006, as many as 15 million people will get a combined statement about what they should expect in terms of their occupational pension and their basic state pension entitlement. The new statement will allow individuals to make informed decisions about their financial needs in retirement and encourage them to take advantage of membership of their employer's scheme.

My hon. Friend asked about Ireland and about clawback that cannot take account of increases in state pension. A majority of members of Irish pension schemes are covered by integrated schemes. The amendments made by the Irish Government do not phase out integration. The change was made simply to ensure that pensioners got the full value of the state pension increase in Ireland. We have no evidence that occupational pension schemes in the UK take increases in the state pension into

account once a member's pension has gone into payment. There would be no additional benefit to scheme members by following the Irish legislation in this matter. However, I am happy to discuss this subject with my hon. Friends on 6 November. If they have evidence, I ask them to provide it at our meeting. Many, although not the majority of, private sector defined benefit schemes are designed to take account of state retirement benefits. The factors used by schemes operating integration vary and it can be achieved in a number of ways. It remains a fact however that whatever method is used by a scheme to achieve integration in a contributory scheme, the employee will pay less than in a corresponding non-integrated scheme.

As to whether the clawback system is unfair to women, all pension schemes must have an equal treatment rule. Since May 1990, the date of a European Court ruling, occupational pensions have had to be equal for men and women who are doing the same work of equal value. If a member believes that the rules of her scheme discriminate against women, she can lodge a claim with an employment tribunal. The same applies to a part-time worker.

The Government recognise the need to boost rates of pension for low earners and those who take breaks in employment to look after children. That is why, starting next year, we are reforming the state earnings-related pension scheme through the state second pension, which will give more help to those on low earnings—some 14 million people. Some 2 million carers and 2 million long-term disabled people with broken work records will be among those helped to build up second-tier pensions for the first time. Those who are looking after a sick or disabled person, or caring for a child under six, will also benefit for the first time. Women will particularly benefit from those changes.

As I said earlier, occupational pension provision in the UK is voluntary. It is up to employers to decide the nature of the scheme and the benefits that they will provide. A scheme will, however, have to meet any Inland Revenue and legislative requirements in force. Also, if the scheme is contracted-out there are certain other conditions that must be met.

Pension schemes vary greatly in the type of benefits that they provide, as do the rules on how those benefits are calculated. Integrated schemes have been in place since the introduction of the state retirement pension. Now to compel schemes to withdraw integration would be in effect a retrospective measure and likely to place significant unexpected costs upon employers. It has to be a matter for employers to decide whether their schemes should continue to operate on an integrated basis.

The contribution levels of schemes are based on benefits that accrue under them. Removing clawback may also result in scheme members having to make higher levels of contributions than they do now. In recent years, trade unions and members in general have pressed employers to review integrated arrangements. My hon. Friend mentioned some of the successes achieved in that area. I do not argue against those continued debates and negotiations, because changing a scheme must be a decision for employers and those who negotiate on behalf of employees. I am not arguing against her, but trying to put the debate in context. The picture as a whole is a little more complex than some of our colleagues appear to wish it to be.

We welcome any action taken to improve the level of occupational pension available to lower paid employees. Some employers have indeed made changes to how they operate integration and some have ended the practice in respect of their scheme altogether. Perhaps some more will do so, following the campaign run by my hon. Friends and UNIFI with some success. The Government hope that all employers will see the advantages of ensuring that pension scheme benefits are fair to all employees.

The provision of an occupational pension by an employer for his employees has always been voluntary. It remains for the employer to decide what type of scheme and level of benefits he wishes to provide. It is therefore very important that employees fully understand the type of scheme that is run by their employer and the benefits that they can expect at retirement.

The Government recognise the importance of good information, which enables individuals to plan their income in retirement. That is why we will introduce, in April, the new pension service, which will help provide integrated roll-out of information about the state and second-tier pensions, whether provided by the state or the private sector. Occupational pensions play an important part in providing income in retirement. They have been one of the great pension success stories and we will continue to support and encourage them.

The Government came to power four years ago, but we did not inherit a blank sheet of paper. The state system was badly in need of modernisation. It excluded more than a million women, thereby causing them to be in poverty. From a standing start, the Government have worked to identify the poorest pensioners, and to put in place the minimum income guarantee.

We have been criticised for the complexities of the MIG, but it was right not to wait the three or four years that it would have taken to create an all-singing, all-dancing system. We therefore rolled our sleeves up and tackled pensioner poverty. We got the job done, with the result that more than 1.6 million pensioners—many of them women—who lost out when the welfare state was created have received an increase in their basic pension income of an average of £15 per week. In addition, the latest figures show that the last 100,000 or so who have gained access to the minimum income guarantee have received an increase of some £20 per week. We are therefore reaching the very poorest pensioners, and that is important.

The modernisation strategy has to be successful, however. We are not dealing only with pensioner poverty today; we must ensure that the pension system is modernised in a way that will prevent pensioner poverty in the future. It is a big task. I have said to colleagues that it is a bit like painting the Forth road bridge—no sooner has one finished than one has to start all over. However, with a mixture of public and private provision, every change and modernisation in the state or private sectors will help to establish the principle, for the first time, that every citizen has equal access to the basic state pension and the minimum income guarantee. Citizens will also have access, in the work place, to a range of pension benefits.

That is why the second state pension and stakeholder pensions are so important. From a standing start, we have already ensured that hundreds of thousands of workers who

*[Mr. Ian McCartney]*

previously had no pension now have access to a second-tier pension. Also, more than 150,000 small companies that had never considered having a pension scheme have now established such a scheme. That is essential progress.

People can also top up their pensions by investing in additional voluntary contributions. From this April, anyone who belongs to an occupational scheme with earnings up to £30,000 a year can top up their pension by investing in a stakeholder pension. A major modernisation strategy is in place, and great progress is being made.

I should like to continue this dialogue with my colleagues and employers. One thing is certain, regardless of whether the scheme provided is in the public or private sector: when an employer makes a contribution, the take-up by employees is significantly larger. We will do whatever is necessary to get the message across to employers that investing in pensions for their employees is the same as investing in the work force.

Increasingly, employers recognise the importance of a trained and committed work force in the global economy. Such employees are effective and committed, but the cost of training them is huge. Employers want to retain trained employees, and so I believe that employment packages will soon begin to outline employee pension entitlements, as well as weekly or monthly pay.

I am optimistic about the future, and I look forward to further debates and discussions. I do not think that we will resolve the issue on 6 November, but the Government's strategy is clear. We want to ensure that everyone in Britain gets the opportunity to have a second-tier pension on top of the basic state pension. That will ensure that we will never again have a large number of retired people in Britain living in poverty.

I thank my hon. Friend for raising the subject of this debate, and I look forward to our meeting on 6 November.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 17 October 2001*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

### CITY OF LONDON (WARD ELECTIONS) BILL

*Motion made,*

That the promoters of the City of London (Ward Elections) Bill which originated in this House in the last Parliament but had not received the Royal Assent may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the bill in the present session of Parliament; and the petition for the bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable to it shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That the bill shall be presented to the House by deposit in the Private Bill Office no later than the fifth day on which the House sits after this day;

That a declaration signed by the agent shall be annexed to the bill, stating that it is the same in every respect as the bill presented in this House in the last Parliament;

That on the next sitting day following presentation, the Clerk in the Private Bill Office shall lay the bill on the Table of the House;

That in the present session of Parliament the bill shall be deemed to have passed through every stage through which it had passed in the last Parliament, and shall be recorded in the Journal of the House as having passed those stages;

That no further fees shall be charged to such stages.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

## SELECTION

*Ordered,*

That Mr. James Cran be discharged from the Committee of Selection and Mr. John Hayes be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Nick Ainger, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## WALES

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

### Rural Housing

1. **Mr. Elfyn Llwyd** (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): What discussions he has had with the First Secretary on the provision of rural housing in Wales; and if he will make a statement. [4190]

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Paul Murphy):** I have regular meetings with the First Secretary to discuss a range of issues, including the provision of housing. Rural housing has been and continues to be a high priority for the National Assembly. The Assembly aims to develop thriving rural communities, with everyone in Wales having the opportunity to live in good-quality, affordable housing and being able to choose where they live and to decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families.

**Mr. Llwyd:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that reply. He will know that there is a crisis in rural housing in Wales, and that the crisis has become something of a politicised subject. May I ask him, respectfully, to work with some of his noble Friends, with other Labour party members and with all the political parties in Wales to build a consensus, so that we can produce proper and lasting answers for the people of Wales? If we fail them, we all, as political parties, fail them.

**Mr. Murphy:** I have no problem with what the hon. Gentleman has said. Our rural communities in Wales are represented by Plaid Cymru, the Labour party and the Liberal Democrat party, all of which I think, have in mind the same solutions for rural housing in Wales. The Assembly has also taken very vigorous action on the issue, providing £18 million for social housing in rural Wales. Additionally, Homebuy is a low-cost housing scheme, and local authorities in Wales are identifying affordable sites for local people. I therefore agree with the hon. Gentleman on the issue.

### NHS Waiting Times

2. **Mr. David Amess** (Southend, West): What recent discussions he has had with the First Minister on NHS waiting times. [4192]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Don Touhig):** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I regularly meet the First Minister to discuss the NHS in Wales. The subject of waiting times is of course often on the agenda.

**Mr. Amess:** Now that we are in the fifth year of this appalling Government, is the Minister aware that the number of patients waiting for in-patient or day-case

treatment has increased from more than 6,000 to 9,385? It is a staggering increase. Who does the Secretary of State for Wales blame for that disgraceful increase?

**Mr. Touhig:** The increase in the number of in-patient and day cases is 779, not the figure that the hon. Gentleman gave. Clearly, however, the Government are disappointed by the increase, and that disappointment is shared by my colleague the Assembly Secretary, Jane Hutt. Disappointment, however, is not enough: we must do something about it. The Government are doing something about it. We are putting extra funding into the national health service: £35 million extra this year to ease waiting times and emergency pressures, on top of the £40 million that was put in last year. Additionally, there is a further £3 million to increase bed capacity, and £12 million to help reduce orthopaedic waiting lists. All those public expenditure increases are opposed by Conservative Members.

Ultimately, resources alone will not be enough; reform of the health service is also necessary. When the Government introduce measures shortly to reform the health service, I hope that the hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) and other Conservative Members will support them.

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones** (Cardiff, Central): Now that the Government have given the country the opportunity, with devolution, to embark on different policies—both in the health service and in other services—in different parts of the country, what efforts are the Government and the Assembly making to compare and contrast the efficacy of the various policies on either side of the Severn and on either side of the border between Scotland and England?

**Mr. Touhig:** A joint ministerial committee composed of Health Ministers from the United Kingdom Government and the devolved Administrations will meet on Monday. There is a continuous dialogue between the Government and the devolved Administrations to ensure that we have one objective in mind: improving health care and the health service across the United Kingdom. As a result of devolution, there are of course different roads on which we shall travel to achieve that objective. Our objective, however, is the same.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): Ulster Unionist Members welcome the concept of reform of the health service. Has the Minister discussed with his colleagues in Wales the possibility of using some of that extra money to purchase provision in Germany and France, where they seem to be able to provide the operations that we cannot?

**Mr. Touhig:** I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. Of course, decisions on patients being treated in other countries in the European Union are initially a matter for clinical referral. They then have to be supported by the health authority that has to provide the funding, and they also require the support of the Department of Health. Discussions are taking place between the Department of Health and the devolved Administration in Wales on that matter.

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): The Prime Minister told public service workers yesterday that, despite the international situation, he would continue with his reforms to improve public services. We all want to see such an improvement, but let us consider the facts. In 1997, some 101,000 Welsh residents were waiting for a first out-patient appointment, but on 31 August this year 203,000 were waiting. In 1997, some 28,000 people were waiting for more than three months, but on 31 August 135,000 were waiting. All the Minister can say is that he is "disappointed". Those are appalling figures. Will the Minister meet the Secretary of State for Health to discuss what action needs to be taken now to turn around those figures and improve on the 1997 levels?

**Mr. Touhig:** I must congratulate the hon. Gentleman on reaching his Front Bench position. A boy from the valleys is on the Front Bench—if it is not the Welsh valleys, at least it is the Ribble Valley. We need to put in resources and to reform the health service. We recognise the difficulties and that we are not achieving the targets that we want to achieve. However, it would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman's party would support the Government when we introduce measures to increase health spending and reform the health service to achieve the goal that we all share—to improve the national health service in Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom. Before too long, he will have a chance to support from the Front Bench the Government's proposals for a health Bill for Wales. I hope that I can count on his backing.

**Mr. Evans:** I thank the Minister for his initial remarks. The chilling statistics hide the personal pain of those on the waiting lists. Yesterday, we heard the story of an 88-year-old lady, Violet Lee, who was left for more than 30 hours on a Cardiff hospital trolley. The sick pensioner was among a number of patients forced to wait hours for treatment in the emergency unit of the University of Wales hospital. She also had to wait more than 29 hours for a hot meal. One Pontypool GP I spoke to yesterday, Dr. Greg Graham, said that the situation was getting worse and expressed his frustration. It is little wonder that there has been an 11 per cent. increase in complaints by patients in Wales and that a survey of GPs released today showed that one in four wants to quit the profession. An increasing number are also going private for acute care. I ask the Minister again to meet the Secretary of State for Health and report back to the House on what new measures he will take to halt the rot for the sake of patients in Wales.

**Mr. Touhig:** I have every sympathy with the lady the hon. Gentleman mentions. No one should have to wait in the circumstances that he describes. However, as I said earlier, it is by putting in resources and reforms that we will make changes. I appreciate the comments from Dr. Greg Graham. I know him well and he is a strong advocate of improving the health service. However, I note also that the overwhelming majority of GPs questioned in the survey the hon. Gentleman mentioned believe that patient care has improved in the past five years. The Government have a good record on which to build and we are improving on that. As I said earlier, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give us his support, when he gets the chance, in putting those resources and reforms in place to improve the health service.

## Assembly Funding

3. **Mr. Win Griffiths** (Bridgend): When he last met the First Minister of the National Assembly to discuss the funding of its functions. [4193]

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Paul Murphy):** I meet the First Minister regularly on a range of matters, including funding issues. I also recently met the Assembly's Finance Minister, Edwina Hart. Tomorrow, the Assembly will debate its annual Budget.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I thank my right hon. Friend, his Under-Secretary and his staff at the Wales Office for the excellent relationships that have been developed with the Assembly and the way in which the Department acts as a bridge with the Assembly, as exemplified by the flexibility on the Barnett formula that enabled the extra funding for objective 1. Will my right hon. Friend consider more flexibility for other functions of the Assembly, because needs in Wales have been shown to be much higher than those in other parts of the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Murphy:** I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks. On Monday, Edwina Hart, the Welsh Assembly Finance Minister, announced a further £17 million to support Welsh local authorities. Today, the Government are providing about £1.2 million for Wales, which results from extra money from the Department of Health in England. In recent months, extra money for Wales has included up to £2 million for rate relief grant, more than £2.5 million related to foot and mouth disease, and more than £2 million from the invest-to-save budget. We have also offered to clear outstanding housing debt when local authority stock transfers take place. Potentially, that is worth up to £300 million, and is in addition to the extra £100 million given last year for education and health, and for tackling crime, especially drug crime. All that comes on top of the spending review in 2000, and of the comprehensive spending review before that.

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): Does the Secretary of State agree that the Assembly does not need a new building to carry out its functions and that it would be better if the money earmarked for that project went into public services, and especially the health service?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the Richard Rogers Partnership, the architects of the Assembly building, has issued a statement today, which refutes a statement made by the Finance Minister on 16 January? She said:

"I am pleased to report that since last June we have made excellent progress. We remain on course to deliver a high quality building, on time and within total budget provision."

The Richard Rogers Partnership refutes that statement, and accuses the Finance Minister of refusing to meet to discuss the matter. We are talking about a lot of taxpayers' money. Will the Secretary of State therefore offer to meet the First Minister, to sort out the problem?

**Mr. Murphy:** May I first congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment to the shadow Cabinet? He knows that this is a matter for the Assembly itself to decide. It is time that all hon. Members understood that devolution is here to stay, and that it is for the Assembly to decide whether to have a home of its own—just as we have our own home in the House of Commons.

With regard to the Richard Rogers Partnership, I understand that the Finance Minister is to write to all members of the Assembly—including those in the Conservative party. However, the House must bear in mind what I told my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths): extra money—hundreds of millions of pounds of it—has gone to the Assembly for precisely those public services about which the hon. Gentleman spoke earlier.

## Transport

4. **Mr. Martin Caton** (Gower): What discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on transport in Wales. [4194]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Don Touhig):** My right hon. Friend regularly meets the First Secretary of the National Assembly to discuss wide-ranging current issues affecting Wales, including transport.

Transport generally is a matter for the Assembly, although railways, air and ports remain, generally, the responsibility of the UK Government, working closely with the Assembly. I am keen to continue dialogue with the Assembly and Cabinet colleagues in order to determine how best we can meet the transport needs of Wales.

**Mr. Caton:** I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the people and economy of Wales were especially poorly served by Railtrack, until it was taken into administration 10 days ago? Will he undertake to work in partnership with the Assembly to press the new company when it is set up to invest in the rail infrastructure that we so badly need in Wales? In particular, will he emphasise the need to improve the track west of Cardiff, so that in the 21st century our inter-city trains move faster than Stevenson's Rocket on its first test run?

**Mr. Touhig:** As a regular user of the rail network, I understand—and share—the frustration passengers have had to put up with over past years. The Government are committed to working in close partnership with the Assembly and other stakeholders to improve the railway system. That is why, to achieve that improvement, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions has committed £30 billion to the network over the next 10 years.

**Mr. Roger Williams** (Brecon and Radnorshire): Given the difficulty experienced by Railtrack, will the Minister say what discussions he is having with the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions about the progress on the single rail franchise for Wales, and especially about improvements to the service in rural areas, such as the heart of Wales line that is so important to my constituency of Brecon and Radnorshire?

**Mr. Touhig:** Our colleagues in the Assembly attach considerable importance to developing the new Wales and borders rail franchise and the opportunities that will be

derived from that for improving the whole rail structure and support in Wales. I have met my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and the Assembly's Minister for Environment, Sue Essex, to discuss the all-Wales franchise. We have also had a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Transport, and discussions are continuing. We hope to make progress.

## Education

5. **Dr. Hywel Francis** (Aberavon): What recent discussions he has had with the First Minister of the National Assembly on education in Wales. [4195]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Don Touhig):** My right hon. Friend has met the First Minister on a number of occasions recently to discuss education in Wales.

My right hon. Friend and I have also had meetings and discussions with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in Wales to discuss the forthcoming Education Bill.

**Dr. Francis:** I warmly welcome the National Assembly's discussion document, "The Learning Country". Does my hon. Friend agree that the foundations for such a learning country are being achieved by many schools in Wales, particularly Cymer Afan and Sandfields comprehensive schools in my constituency? Does he agree that our learning country will be achieved only if we base it on the principles of equity, lifelong learning and citizenship?

**Mr. Touhig:** I congratulate Cymer Afan and Sandfields schools on their achievements. It shows what can be done with resources, commitment and the vision of good teachers. The opportunities for all our citizens afforded by a programme of lifelong learning is obvious to us all, and I believe that the publication of "The Learning Country", to which my hon. Friend referred, as well as that of the White Paper, "Schools Achieving Success" contributes to the continuing debate on improving the standards of education that we all want to see.

**Lembit Öpik** (Montgomeryshire): The Rees report on student finance, commissioned by the Welsh Assembly, clearly recommended the abolition of student tuition fees in the interests of widening access to higher education. Would the Minister be willing to promote the abolition of student tuition fees to the Department of Education and Skills in its review of student finance if called upon to do so by the Welsh Assembly?

**Mr. Touhig:** Our core objective is to get more people into higher education. The review of student support was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Skills on 4 October. The Government recognise that the fear of debt can act as a barrier to those wanting to go into higher education—that is why we are having a review.

I am aware of the Rees report, which I think is very constructive. It contains 54 recommendations, which the Assembly is considering. The report does not recommend that students make no contribution to their higher education. However, I believe that that report and the Assembly's response will undoubtedly form part of the consultation announced by my right hon. Friend on 4 October.

## Employment

6. **Alan Howarth** (Newport, East): What his latest assessment is of levels of employment in south-east Wales. [4196]

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Paul Murphy):** Employment in south-east Wales increased slightly to 69 per cent. in 2000. Some 3,800 new jobs have been announced in south-east Wales in the past 12 months through developments in retailing, electronics and communications sectors. However, that does not compensate for the heavy loss of jobs in the area due to the Corus closures. The Government are providing support to those affected in the form of a modernised ISERBS package. This is complemented by a range of Government employment initiatives and by the Assembly's training and regeneration packages.

**Alan Howarth:** I thank my right hon. Friend for the energy that he has put into brokering the well co-ordinated response in south-east Wales to the crisis in the steel industry and the job losses following from it. Does he agree that the fortunes of Newport are crucial to the fortunes of south-east Wales and to employment prospects in particular? Will he do what he can to ensure that at the very earliest opportunity an urban regeneration company is established in Newport with broad scope and depth of resources?

**Mr. Murphy:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for those comments. I entirely agree that an urban regeneration company for the Newport and south Gwent area would be an excellent idea. I understand that Newport county borough council is making proposals regarding the urban regeneration company, which the Assembly is considering in detail. I welcome the proposals, which will serve my constituents as well as those of my right hon. Friend.

**Adam Price** (East Carmarthen and Dinefwr): Do not the recent 800 job losses announced by United States-owned firms in Wales—Corning on Deeside, GEAES in Nant Garw and Dow Corning in Barry—confirm that the Government's core economic policies are destroying the Welsh manufacturing sector? As Secretary of State, what is the right hon. Gentleman doing? What proposals is he putting to his colleagues in Government to prevent further job losses in the Welsh manufacturing sector?

**Mr. Murphy:** As I said in my previous answer and as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, we are deeply concerned about losses in the manufacturing sector in Wales, but I reject the claim that the Government are destroying manufacturing in Wales. He will know that only last week about 250 new jobs for Blaenau Gwent were announced by the First Minister. There have been 350 new jobs at Morrisons in Rogerston, 400 at Oakdale, 188 at SkyTronics in Cardiff and 264 in my constituency. On average, about 300 jobs a month are coming to Wales.

Of course, that does not make up for all the jobs that we have lost, but it is not in any way true to say that we are destroying manufacturing in Wales.

**Mr. John Smith** (Vale of Glamorgan): Given the increasing number of jobs in Wales that are dependent on the aviation industry, will my right hon. Friend assure me that when he next meets the Chancellor of the Exchequer he will press on him that any aid package for that industry includes the capacity to protect aviation jobs in Wales, especially in my constituency?

**Mr. Murphy:** My hon. Friend will know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is sitting next to me and listening. At the end of the day, it is the stability and strength of our economy in Wales that will protect our jobs. That will be the best sort of protection in terms of what has happened on the international scene in the past few weeks.

### Manufacturing Employment

7. **Mr. Graham Brady** (Altrincham and Sale, West): If he will make a statement on manufacturing employment in Wales. [4197]

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Paul Murphy):** Some 7,500 jobs have been announced in the manufacturing sector in Wales in the past 12 months. That is particularly welcome in the context of severe losses in the steel sector.

**Mr. Brady:** I am amazed by the complacency of the Secretary of State's comments. In the past four years throughout the United Kingdom 8 per cent. of the nation's manufacturing jobs have been destroyed by the Government. In Wales, the picture is worse. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that this Government's tax and regulatory policies have been one of the main reasons why those jobs have gone? What is he going to do now to lift that burden from business in Wales and start to reverse the decline?

**Mr. Murphy:** I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman on the basis that he represents a party that saw the loss of 2 million manufacturing jobs during its period of office. Of course we have lost jobs in steel and elsewhere, but as I said earlier jobs are coming to our economy in Wales. Of course I am not complacent. I live in Wales and I represent a Welsh constituency.

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the seven years prior to 1997 under the previous Conservative Government only 100 jobs were created on the St. Asaph business park? In the four years since then, under a Labour Government, 1,100 jobs have been created on that £11.5 million project. Will my right hon. Friend join in congratulating the National Assembly for Wales, Denbighshire county council and the Welsh Development Agency on creating quality jobs in my constituency?

**Mr. Murphy:** Not only do I congratulate my colleagues in the National Assembly, the WDA and the local authority, I congratulate my hon. Friend. He played a major role in the St. Asaph business park development. At present, about 520 people are employed there—100 are in inward investment companies. So, that is a great new story for north Wales and for his constituency in particular.

### Health Service

8. **Julie Morgan** (Cardiff, North): What recent discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on the health service in Wales. [4198]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Don Touhig):** My right hon. Friend and I regularly meet the National Assembly First Minister and the Minister for Health and Social Services to discuss the national health service in Wales.

**Julie Morgan:** I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. He is aware of the plan to phase out health authorities in Wales by 2003 and to give additional powers to local health groups. Will he assure me that the legislation will be in place by 2003 to enable that to happen, so that the layer of bureaucracy can be removed and there can be a further reduction in the quango state and more money for patient care?

**Mr. Touhig:** I know that my hon. Friend is a staunch advocate of the NHS. I can tell her that discussions are on-going about the proposed content of the Welsh health Bill. In addition, discussions are currently taking place between my officials, officials from the Department of Health and the Assembly on time-critical elements that we hope may be included in the NHS reform and decentralisation Bill. Unfortunately, I cannot tell my hon. Friend that the legislation will be on the statute book by the date that she says, because that is a matter for the House to determine when the Government announce their legislative programme, but I can tell her that we are working towards that end.

## PRIME MINISTER

*The Prime Minister was asked—*

### Engagements

Q1. [4220] **David Winnick** (Walsall, North): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 17 October.

**The Prime Minister (Mr. Tony Blair):** Before listing my engagements, may I express on behalf of Members on both sides of the House our deep sadness at the death of Jamie Cann? He was a conscientious Member of Parliament who always battled for his constituency, Ipswich. He will be sadly missed, and our thoughts are with his family at this time.

This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further such meetings later today. Shortly before coming to the House, I spoke to President Bush.

**David Winnick:** In recognising that the terror groups who have struck again are fanatically opposed to a

settlement in the middle east, should not the United States in particular do more to try to bring about a sovereign Palestinian state in the occupied territories? Would it not also be useful if countries such as our own told the Israelis that although they, like any other state, have a perfectly legitimate right to defend their country, as far as the occupied territories are concerned they cannot win against the Palestinians and, frankly, they do not deserve to win?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that the first thing that we should say to Israel is to give our complete condemnation of the assassination of the Israeli Tourism Minister, to express our outrage at his assassination and to urge the Palestinian National Authority to take all measures necessary to apprehend those who are responsible.

As for what my hon. Friend says about the peace process, I do actually believe that the United States of America has been making many efforts to establish a durable peace in the middle east, not least the Tenet plan and the Mitchell plan, which were conceived, and whose implementation was attempted, long before 11 September.

I think that now, however, there is a renewed sense of urgency and a desire to see a durable lasting settlement there, so that Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace. We shall certainly do all that we can to assist that process and move it forward. What we always know about such situations is that unless we do try to put in place a proper process where people negotiate the way forward, the extremists who are opposed to any form of peace settlement move in with their bloodshed, and we need to defeat the extremists and achieve a lasting and durable peace.

**Mr. Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green): I associate myself with the Prime Minister's comments and warm thoughts about Jamie Cann. Those of us on this side of the House who knew him will have memories of a good colleague and friend, and our thoughts also go to his family.

I also associate myself with the Prime Minister's comments on the brutal assassination today of the Israeli Cabinet Minister. Those who may not even have thought about this should know that, as the Prime Minister pointed out, those responsible are determined to break the peace process and ensure that it cannot go ahead; it is not the other way round. Certainly, we, like him, will be very concerned about the way that others react to them.

Some argued, over a week ago, when we were talking about the military action, and some appear to be arguing now, a week later, for a pause in the bombing. I fully understand that bin Laden's propaganda, and pictures in the media of bombs going astray will worry some, but does the Prime Minister agree that it is essential that, having started this action, we see it through, and that to stop now would send out a terrible message to bin Laden, the Taliban and any other rogue state bent on terrorism that they will be allowed to get away with atrocities in future because we lack the resolve to deal with them?

**The Prime Minister:** I do agree with that. I think it is important that we continue this military action and ensure that it is successful.

I can tell the House that we have now significantly damaged the Taliban's military capability, including fast jets, transports and helicopters. We have inflicted very severe damage on their command and control facilities, early warning systems, air defence systems, radar and surface-to-air missile sites, and we have also inflicted heavy damage on the terrorist network and terrorist training camps of al-Qaeda.

We are in the process of establishing an ability to take further military action against both the Taliban regime and the al-Qaeda network, and we are giving additional help to the Northern Alliance in its efforts against the Taliban. The Northern Alliance is now taking territory from the Taliban, and is close to Mazar-i-Sharif in the north and to Kabul.

In any military action there are difficulties—there is no clean or easy way to deal with it—but I think that the House will know that, in the weeks that followed 11 September, we made every effort to give the Taliban regime a chance to be reasonable and to yield up bin Laden and his associates; they refused to do so. We now know quite clearly from the statements made by al-Qaeda and bin Laden since 11 September that, if they are not stopped, they will try to commit further terrorist atrocities. We have no option but to continue this, to bring it to a successful conclusion and to close down that terrorist network once and for all.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** Following that point with the Prime Minister, is not it also correct that ending the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is clearly linked to the same military success? The biggest obstacle that we now see to delivering aid is the control of the vast majority of Afghanistan by the Taliban, who are now, I understand, taxing some of the aid that is going in and even sending some of it to market, not letting it go to those who need it. As we know that some of the key passes into Afghanistan will be closed by the new year, time, as the Prime Minister knows, is short. So would not the best way to ensure that vital aid gets through be for the existing Taliban regime to fall and for a new Government to come to power committed to assisting the aid programme?

**The Prime Minister:** It may again help if I say a word or two about this, because I understand the concerns of aid agencies and others about humanitarian assistance going through to people inside Afghanistan. Around Afghanistan, on the borders, we have sufficient provision of food, camps and shelter for about 2.5 million people. Some 4 million people are already being helped. Inside Afghanistan is the problem. The World Food Programme believes that it can get in some 12,000 tonnes of food in the coming week, even despite the difficulties, and it has already got in several thousands tonnes of food in the past few days. That is difficult, but it is important for people to realise why it is difficult.

It is difficult because the Taliban regime are harassing the UN convoys, intimidating them and, in some cases, taking over their equipment, their communications or the sites where the UN staff are. They are taxing some of the food—so-called taxing—as it comes into Afghanistan, and they are trying to lift other parts of it and use it for their own purposes. If we have their co-operation in the humanitarian help to the Afghan people, we can make sure that that food gets through. It is they who are the obstacle, and we will do everything that we possibly can, despite their obstruction, to get that food through to

people. However, it is very important that people realise that it is their obstruction that is stopping the food getting through to the people who need it.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** Our aim must be to bring bin Laden and al-Qaeda to justice, as the Prime Minister has said from the beginning, but until there is a Government in Afghanistan who are determined to rid themselves of bin Laden and al-Qaeda, that, as he knows, will be immensely difficult to achieve. Will he therefore, take this opportunity to assure the House that such a Government must be broadly based and include not just the mainly Tajik Northern Alliance, but other tribes, such as the Pushtun, Hazaras and others? Will he also confirm, against some reports, that he and the United States are talking widely to all the people who could help to put together such a Government and who may already have plans to do so?

**The Prime Minister:** We certainly are talking to all the people who would have to be involved in order to have a broad-based post-Taliban regime in Afghanistan. However, the work that is being carried out is being undertaken principally by Mr. Brahimi, the UN representative, and he is in talks with all the relevant ethnic groupings in Afghanistan. It is extremely important that we have a successor to the Taliban regime that has broad support in the country and that we commit ourselves to assisting that regime in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Now, some few weeks after 11 September, I can assure the House that the coalition for action remains strong and that countries are pledging their support—military, as well as logistical support—right around the world. On the humanitarian effort, we are doing everything that we reasonably, humanly can, and will do more. In respect of what happens after the Taliban fall, we are working to make sure that the Afghan people, who are the victims of the Taliban, get the best possible prospect of a decent and stable future.

**Mr. Alan Simpson** (Nottingham, South): The Prime Minister will know of the statement made by the aid agencies this morning that 400,000 people in Afghanistan are surviving on grass and wild vegetation. He will also know that that statement makes it clear that the problems of getting humanitarian relief through are caused by a combination of the tithes imposed by the Taliban, obstructions placed by the Northern Alliance and the bombing that makes drivers reluctant to go into the area. The aid agencies have called for a pause in the bombing to feed those 400,000, and the 2 million who will not have enough food to survive the winter. Will we take any notice of that call?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, we take notice of the concerns that the agencies have raised but I must say to my hon. Friend that the principal problem for the drivers of the UN convoys is the Taliban regime's harassment and intimidation of them. We should remember that anyone who associates with the UN inside the Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan is liable, according to the Taliban's own statements, to be prosecuted by them.

The World Food Programme believes that it can get 12,000 tonnes of food into Afghanistan in the next week. We are doing everything we can to remove the obstacles, but the single most important thing for the Afghan people is to be released from the tyranny of the Taliban regime as swiftly as possible. That is essential, and it is essential for humanitarian reasons, too.

I also stress to my hon. Friend and to the House that the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan pre-dates 11 September by a long way. Literally millions of people were refugees before then and living in conditions of deprivation and, in some cases, starvation. So we will continue to do everything we can. We cannot have the Taliban regime remain in power and able to use this humanitarian crisis as a reason for warding off the action that we take.

**Mr. Charles Kennedy** (Ross, Skye and Inverness, West): May I associate Liberal Democrat Members with the proper expressions of condolences about the two individuals that the leader of the Conservative party and the Prime Minister have already offered?

Given the need for the military action in Afghanistan to be underpinned by the moral authority of the maximum humanitarian effort that is consistent with the military and political objectives that we support, will the Prime Minister acknowledge that anything that can be done to open the passage of roads into Afghanistan will be welcome? Is the international community, for example, considering safe corridors that will perhaps be under longer-term United Nations administration?

**The Prime Minister:** We are looking urgently at all the different ways that we can try to secure corridors by which food can get into Afghanistan. Of course, one of the areas in which the military and the humanitarian actions interconnect is that the more territory that is under some sort of control by forces hostile to the Taliban, the more aid we can get into Afghanistan. The actions are linked. We are also working very closely with the United Nations to see what further measures it can take too.

**Mr. Kennedy:** UNICEF warns today that up to 100,000 children could die over the next few months because of climatic conditions, dreadful internal conditions and the lack of aid, so will the Prime Minister tell us what steps if any—perhaps through the use of American spy satellites—have been taken to ensure that the aid drops that have already taken place have, in fact, reached the desired destinations?

**The Prime Minister:** We believe that most of the aid that is being put into Afghanistan reaches the people whom it is supposed to reach, but we cannot be sure. We are operating in extremely difficult territory in the areas controlled by the Taliban where, as I said, there is a great deal of intimidation and harassment by them. However, in the conversation that I had with President Bush a few moments ago, we both agreed that the humanitarian aspect of this mission is as important as the military. Indeed, the two are linked. It is important that we do everything that we possibly can to remove any obstacles there and to get the aid in. We will consider what further help we can give to the refugees both on the borders of Afghanistan and those on the move inside Afghanistan.

I simply express to the House the obvious point that it is an extremely difficult situation in which there are very poor communications, poor infrastructure and hordes of

soldiers from the Taliban who can literally take over an area very quickly and intimidate the people there, including, of course, the UN staff.

**Mr. Eddie McGrady** (South Down): Is the Prime Minister aware that the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, the right hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), will, as we understand it, withdraw his Ministers from the partnership Executive in Northern Ireland within the next few days, leading to the collapse of the power-sharing Executive and the unravelling of the devolved institutions? Does he agree that that will create a political vacuum in Northern Ireland that might only be filled by men of violence? Will he use his good offices to ensure that the hard-won peace process, even at this eleventh hour, can be saved, in partnership with the Irish Government, for the people of Ireland, north and south?

**The Prime Minister:** I am obviously deeply committed to the peace process moving forward. Of course it is important that we do everything we can to ensure that we have the stability and institutions that we want. However, that requires all those who have supported the Belfast agreement—the Good Friday agreement—to do what they are supposed to do under its terms. My hon. Friend knows full well what I am referring to. If all parties are to have the confidence that we are moving forward on an agreed basis—namely, peaceful and democratic means as the only way in which to advance their cause—it is important that everyone implements all the obligations under the agreement, not simply some of them.

Q2. [4221] **Mr. Peter Luff** (Mid-Worcestershire): Did the Prime Minister see the comments of the Anglican vicar who lost a relative on 11 September? He told the BBC that Jo Moore's infamous e-mail was

"basically burying bad news . . . under the bodies of six and a half thousand people. "

Indeed, she did not even include the relatives of those who died in her belated list of apologies. Did anyone in Downing street speak to Jo Moore after her e-mail or seek her resignation at any time?

**The Prime Minister:** First, I do not defend in any shape or form what Jo Moore said, which was horrible, wrong and stupid. I do, however, defend the decision that to sack someone and end their career was too heavy a penalty. That was the decision taken. I supported it and regard the matter as closed.

## Local Government Reform

Q3. [4222] **Mr. David Chaytor** (Bury, North): If he will make a statement on the reform of local government finance.

**The Prime Minister:** We will publish a White Paper on local government. We are also working with local government to review revenue grant distribution to create a fair and transparent system that enables councils to meet the needs of their communities. These changes will be introduced in 2003-04.

**Mr. Chaytor:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. I want to ask him about the standard spending assessment for education. Last year, a primary school pupil in my constituency received around £2,300 per annum; a primary school pupil in the city of Westminster received more than £3,300 per annum; and a primary school pupil in the best-funded local authority received £4,300. Does my right hon. Friend think that that is fair? Can the system be justified to my constituents any longer?

**The Prime Minister:** It is precisely because of people's concerns that we are reviewing the system, as my hon. Friend knows. However, it is important that such a complex system is reviewed properly and that we get the answers right. He will know that in Bury, as in other parts of the country, there has been a massive increase in the amount of money that goes into the education budgets, irrespective of what system we use. That is one reason why it is so important that we continue to invest in our public services so that education, health and other services get what they need.

**Dr. Jenny Tonge** (Richmond Park): Have recent events affected the Government's thinking on the siting of airports, especially those near London—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. This is a closed question. The hon. Lady cannot ask about that.

## Engagements

Q4. [4223] **Dr. Desmond Turner** (Brighton, Kemptown): I hope that my right hon. Friend agrees that Railtrack's fate sends all private companies involved in the delivery of public services a clear signal that they can no longer expect to be feather-bedded. Can he assure the House that any future developments will be determined by the imperative to give quality and value in services to the public?

**The Prime Minister:** I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. It was important, particularly because we were being asked for billions of pounds of extra public subsidy for Railtrack, that we took the action necessary to put the company on a better footing for the future, so that the interests of the travelling public come first. We know what a disaster rail privatisation was; it is our job and our duty to make sure that we put it right, and we are doing so.

**Mr. Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green): Why does the Prime Minister think that more than a quarter of all family doctors now want to leave the NHS?

**The Prime Minister:** There are huge strains on family doctors at the moment because they are going through a period of enormous change. We are moving the whole of primary care to primary care trusts. However, I think that family doctors believe that primary care trusts are the right way forward. They also believe, as the right hon. Gentleman will see from the survey on which he based his question, that the services that they offer to their patients today are greatly improved compared with a few years ago.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** If that is the case, why does the same British Medical Association survey show that nine

out of 10 GPs believe that the Prime Minister's reforms are unachievable, and two thirds think that his plans will do nothing to improve care for patients?

It is not only the doctors. A constituent of mine—*[Interruption.]* They do not like it. A constituent of mine recently died in hospital after waiting nine hours on a trolley. His family were not aware that he had been admitted or, for a further three days, that he had died. When they came to pay their respects, they found that the body had been lost. Does not the Prime Minister think that all his promises of a better tomorrow will sound hollow to such people?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course what happened to the right hon. Gentleman's constituent is unacceptable. There are situations in the national health service today that are unacceptable. People wait too long for operations; we do not have enough doctors, nurses and consultants; we need to renovate many hospital buildings and introduce new technology. All those things require investment and money, and I am afraid that the difference between our two political parties is that we support the additional investment and his party opposes it.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** It is the usual story. The Prime Minister talks about investment and then, as he did the other day, pleads for more time. What is the point when his own Ministers, some of whom are present, belie his words? His Health Secretary goes around telling everybody that the NHS will remain a state monopoly as long as Labour is in power. Labour Members are all nodding because they enjoy that. A senior Cabinet Minister is sent to tell the unions that their working practices will not change, no matter what. Is it not clear that when it comes to pleas for more time, with Labour it will be more wasted time? *[Interruption.]* They do not like it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The Leader of the Opposition must be heard.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** They do not like it, Mr. Speaker. The truth that the Prime Minister has to be aware of is that Labour always puts favours to its friends ahead of fairness to patients.

**The Prime Minister:** First, on the trade unions, we want to ensure that when services are contracted out, it is not done on the basis of poorer terms and conditions of employment for the staff. One of the things that we have learned over the past few years, not only under this Government but under the previous Government, is that if the impact of contracting out is simply to undermine the terms and conditions of staff, it will not usually lead to a better service, and having discussions on that basis is perfectly sensible.

We are employing many thousands more nurses in the health service, and there are more doctors and consultants. The larg[illegible] hospital-building programme since the war is under way, and GP premises are being renovated. Of course, it takes a very long time to do that, but it can be done only if we put in the necessary investment.

The position of the Labour party is that it is necessary to put investment into health care, education and other public services before short-term tax cuts. The right hon. Gentleman's position is to stand in the opposite corner. That is why, no matter how much the Conservatives talk about public services, they will never have credibility on that issue.

**Joan Ruddock** (Lewisham, Deptford): My right hon. Friend spoke earlier about the efforts to bring together the various interest groups that might form a post-Taliban Government. My concern is that they are probably all men. Does he agree that there are many courageous and able women in Afghanistan and in exile, and will he carefully examine the models of female participation that paved the way for women's political involvement in the transitions in South Africa and Northern Ireland?

**The Prime Minister:** Female participation would certainly be an innovation in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime. I assure my hon. Friend that we are considering how to have a post-Taliban Government in Afghanistan that is as broad-based as possible, and how we can help Afghanistan get over some of the extremism that has so disfigured the country. Under the Taliban, not only are women not allowed to occupy any position of power in public life, they were first driven out of Kabul university, and then girls were forbidden to go to school. There are many changes in which female participation would be most welcome.

Q5. [4224] **Mr. Simon Thomas** (Ceredigion): I remind the Prime Minister of the words of the Foreign Secretary in the House yesterday:

"There is no problem finding the money to pay for aid to Afghanistan".—[*Official Report*, 16 October 2001; Vol. 372, c. 1060.]

The Prime Minister has just told the House that the humanitarian aspect is as important as the military aspect. How does he explain the fact that to date the World Food Programme has received only one third of the money promised to it by the west to feed the starving in Afghanistan? How can we stop the Muslim world feeling that we find it easier to find money for bombs than for bread? Will he now lead a humanitarian coalition, as he has led the military coalition, to squeeze out of the rich west the money to feed 6 million people?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman's question is predicated on a misunderstanding of the true position: $700 million have been pledged and the World Food Programme needs about $130 million of that immediately. It has got it. When it needs more, it will have more. The issue is not the sum that has been pledged: it has been made absolutely clear that that money will be available. The issue is how we get the food into Afghanistan. On the question of the humanitarian coalition, we are doing everything that we can, but, as I said earlier, we face obstruction by the Taliban regime.

As for the military action, I ask the hon. Gentleman to reflect on the fact that there is no alternative to taking action against those who perpetrated the terrorist attacks on 11 September other than to say that we will sit back and let them carry on doing it, which would be interpreted as another sign of weakness. I find it extraordinary that anyone can look at the situation and not realise the absolute necessity of acting and of carrying that action through.

Of course it is difficult. Anyone with any sense of humanity who sees the humanitarian problems and realises the appalling difficulties of any form of military conflict would prefer not to take the action, but what have we learned since 11 September? It is that the Taliban will not yield up the terrorist networks and, what is more, those people will do anything they can to repeat the atrocities that they committed on 11 September. In such circumstances, we have no alternative but to act. Our primary aim should be to make the action effective and to get it done as swiftly as we can.

**Mr. Piara S. Khabra** (Ealing, Southall): Is the Prime Minister aware of the existence of madrasas in Pakistan in which the indoctrination of young people in fundamentalist education takes place, preparing them for future terrorist activities? Is he also aware that there are in Pakistan centres where training in the use of weapons is carried out? Will he take the opportunity to speak to the President of Pakistan and say that those institutions should be closed to ensure that the culture of terrorism is rooted out of society?

**The Prime Minister:** I do not think that it is for us to start dictating to countries what they do, but I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important that we address the issue. I found, both when I was in Pakistan and out in the Gulf, that there was considerable understanding of the need for the moderate parts of Islam to regain full and proper ownership of their own religious beliefs from the extremists. I hope very much that that is what happens; I know that it is essential for the future stability of the world.

**Mr. Roy Beggs** (East Antrim): Does the Prime Minister share the opinion expressed by Northern Ireland Assembly Minister Brid Rodgers that only the IRA can save the Belfast agreement? Does he agree that the issue of decommissioning all illegally held weapons and explosives cannot be fudged? All terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland, whether so-called loyalists or republicans, must commit exclusively to democratic processes and sever immediately all links with other terrorist groups, such as those based in Turkey, Slovakia, Spain and, indeed, Colombia.

**The Prime Minister:** I do agree that it is important for all people to express themselves and indeed to be committed to exclusively peaceful and democratic means. Of course, that is the very reason why we are insistent that weapons are put beyond use, not merely by republicans, but by loyalists and all those groups who have acted and used terrorism in the past 30 years to do so much damage in Northern Ireland. I very much hope that, if we can get that process under way, the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will work with us to make sure that the institutions can be given the stability that they need, derived from people's confidence that exclusively peaceful and democratic means are going to be used.

## BILLS PRESENTED

### Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates)

Mr. Secretary Byers, supported by the Prime Minister, Secretary Margaret Beckett, Secretary Clare Short, Mr. Secretary Reid, Mr. Secretary Murphy, Mrs. Secretary Liddell, Ms Secretary Hewitt, Secretary Estelle Morris, Secretary Tessa Jowell, Mr. Nick Raynsford and Dr. Alan Whitehead, presented a Bill to exclude from the operation of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 certain matters relating to the selection of candidates by political parties: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. Explanatory notes to be printed. [Bill 28].

### Protection of Property (Static Devices)

Michael Fabricant presented a Bill to allow a property owner to erect static devices with warning signs for the protection of his property; and to indemnify the property owner from prosecution or liability if a person or persons committing a criminal act on his property is injured by a static protection device: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 19 July 2002, and to be printed [Bill 29].

### Environmental Audit

Mr. David Chaytor, supported by Mr. Harold Best, Mrs. Helen Clark, Mr. Colin Challen, Sue Doughty, Mr. Neil Gerrard, Mr. Jon Owen Jones, Ian Lucas, Mr. Malcolm Savidge, Mr. Simon Thomas, Joan Walley and David Wright, presented a Bill to require the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine and report on the environmental impact of public expenditure, and the environmental performance of government departments and certain other public bodies against targets set by Ministers; to provide for the establishment of an environmental auditor general to carry out such functions and report thereupon to the House of Commons; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 30 November, and to be printed [Bill 30].

# Orders of the Day

## European Communities (Amendment) Bill

[4th Allotted Day]

*Order for Third Reading read.*

3.32 pm

**The Minister for Europe (Peter Hain):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Foreign Secretary is representing the United Kingdom at a meeting today in Luxembourg of the General Affairs Council, which will discuss the European Union's overall counter-terrorism policy in response to the atrocities on 11 September. In particular, EU Foreign Ministers will review progress on the package of measures called for at the emergency European Council on 21 September. They will also discuss the way forward on Afghanistan and how best to ensure a better future for the country and its people. The Foreign Secretary will then immediately travel to Turkey for further talks. The Turks are an important part of the international coalition against terrorism, and we will continue to work closely with them and all other allies in the coalition to ensure that terrorism does not prevail.

I recently made my first visit to central Europe as Minister for Europe. In Hungary and the Czech Republic, I saw countries, Governments and people determined to be a part of the EU. I have also met Ministers from Poland, Cyprus, Malta, Estonia and Slovenia; they all look to the EU as their future and they look to Britain as their champion. They want EU membership, and they want it now. They think that the EU has delayed too long. They, and all other candidates like them, want to take their place as full members of the European family, which history has long denied them. They asked me with some bemusement how those in Britain who say that they are in favour of enlargement can at the same time be against the only treaty that will deliver it on time and in good order. I put that same question to the Conservative Opposition today. By voting against the Bill, they are voting against all Britain's friends and allies in eastern, central and southern Europe who are anxiously knocking on the door to enter.

**Mrs. Angela Browning** (Tiverton and Honiton): I am grateful to the Minister. Like him, I have spoken to officials, particularly in Poland and Hungary, about their countries joining the EU. Did they ask him what arrangements the UK Government have tried to put in place to make sure that the common agricultural policy will work effectively? As he knows, agriculture is particularly important to those countries. What did they ask him and what did he reply?

**Peter Hain:** Perhaps I have the advantage over the hon. Lady, as I have spoken to Ministers in those countries, not simply officials—*[Interruption.]* Okay, and officials as well. The answer to her question is simple. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have all completed negotiations on a range of chapters, up to the total of 31, which is their aim for full accession. Agriculture is one of those that still have to be negotiated. There are concerns, in relation to Poland especially, about the

*[Peter Hain]*

reforms that will be necessary in the common agricultural policy. We will tackle that agenda and tackle it with the candidate countries, as we are doing.

Reform of the common agricultural policy must not be used as an excuse to deny enlargement. A series of vested interests need to be overcome among some of our fellow member states in order to reform the CAP. It is important that we do not allow those vested interests to triumph by blocking enlargement. We want the candidate countries in, and we want to conduct both reforms in parallel.

**Mr. David Chidgey** (Eastleigh): I endorse the Minister's remarks. Can he confirm that in our efforts to achieve enlargement within the timetable set out, it will be necessary for all the applicant states to meet the full requirements of the acquis, and that there will be no political fudge at the last minute to achieve our political requirements of enlargement of the EU?

**Peter Hain:** No. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that cannot be the case under the treaty. Each of the applicants must sign off and agree the 31 chapters involved in the acquis, then they must ratify the treaty through their domestic process. There is no question of fudges. Detailed negotiations are necessary and much progress has been made. The Czech Republic, for example, has signed off 19 chapters. Cyprus is in a similar position. In the next year or so, we must redouble our efforts to make sure that the other candidates can come in, particularly those that are likely to be in the first wave. We are determined to play our part to ensure that enlargement happens on time, from 1 January 2004. Getting the Bill through the House tonight is an important part of that process. *[Interruption.]*

The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow), whom I see sitting on the Front Bench instead of complaining from the Back Benches about European policy, says "Nonsense." Enlargement is the only show in town. If hon. Members want enlargement, and if they do not want all our friends in eastern and central Europe to be denied the opportunity of joining the European Union, they should vote for the Bill. If not, they are against those countries and their interests, and they should go out and tell them that that is their position.

**Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East): I thank the Minister for giving way. As my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow) cannot answer for himself, may I suggest an answer on his behalf? The Nice treaty covers many matters other than enlargement, such as the creation of a European military force outside the NATO structure. How can the Minister try to blackmail the House into saying that we must vote for the Bill, because if we vote against it for any reason whatever, we are voting against enlargement? That is, as my hon. Friend rightly said, utter nonsense.

**Peter Hain:** Part of my duties is to educate Opposition Members about Europe. That is hard work in several cases, and the hon. Gentleman is an example. I thought that the edict from the new leadership of the Conservative Opposition was for them to take a low profile on European matters. I thought that they had instructions not to say anything about European policies that might deflect attention from the domestic agenda. However, I am not surprised. Their policies are not just unmentionable; they are unspeakable as well. We must make it clear, so that the House and voters understand, that Opposition Members such as the hon. Gentleman and the entire Eurosceptic Conservative Front Bench are not so much anti-Europe as anxious to be out of Europe, as the former Chancellor, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) so eloquently said.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis) is a Conservative Whip? Does his intervention indicate a new dispensation within the Opposition? Apparently, in order to get a job on the Front Bench, Opposition Members must be able to defy their leader about keeping quiet on Europe.

**Peter Hain:** My hon. Friend makes the point very well. I look forward to hearing many more interventions being made from the Back Benches by Front Benchers such as the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash), who is there at the moment. It is a new novelty in opposition.

**Mr. John Bercow** (Buckingham): Novelties are new.

**Peter Hain:** Indeed. The hon. Gentleman is very quick, and I congratulate him on that.

Let us be clear that our Government want enlargement just as much as the candidate countries, not only because we have strong ties with each of them and because it is in their interests, but because it is in Britain's interests.

**Mr. Robert Jackson** (Wantage): The Minister is right that the practical effect of denying the Bill its Third Reading would be to ensure that Britain could not ratify the Nice treaty. Does he agree that the certain consequence would be the throwing of a major spanner into the enlargement works?

**Peter Hain:** I am grateful that sense has prevailed at least somewhere on the Opposition Benches. The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. If we do not carry this Bill in the House and the other place, we will be unable to ratify the Nice treaty, which will fall apart. Britain would then be in a dangerous position, as it would be a champion of enlargement that could not introduce its own Bill to ratify the treaty that makes enlargement possible. I am sure that I have his support in saying that there is no alternative. If we want enlargement to occur on time and to ensure the entry on 1 January of the first wave of countries, including many of our friends, such as the Poles, Czechs, Hungarians and others, the Bill needs to pass through the House—and quickly.

**Mr. Ian Davidson** (Glasgow, Pollok): My right hon. Friend stressed the importance of the House enacting the Bill so that the treaty can be ratified. Is he aware that Ireland has rejected the proposal on which the Bill is based? Does that mean that all our discussion is immaterial or does not the Irish rejection matter?

**Peter Hain:** Neither suggestion is true. Three countries have already ratified the treaty and we intend also to be in the first batch that do so. The more countries that ratify

it, the more progress can be made in securing the enlargement that we, at least, want.

On the Irish decision, my hon. Friend made an important point to which I want to respond fully. Consultations have taken place between the European Union leadership, including Britain, and the Irish Government. They have asked for time to consider their position. *[Interruption.]* It is interesting to hear scoffing, howls of laughter and cheering at that prospect. However, if ratification is not agreed by any member state, including Britain, enlargement cannot proceed. If enlargement is desirable, as I believe it to be, it must proceed.

**Roger Casale** (Wimbledon): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, although it is sometimes difficult to understand the exact position of the Opposition, it is clear that they are not against the enlargement of the European Union, but want an enlargement that will weaken or undermine it, instead of consolidating it and reinforcing its capacity to act?

**Peter Hain:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I do not think that the Opposition are in favour of proper enlargement. They want to wreck the prospects of the candidate countries, as well as Europe, the Bill and the possibility of getting ratification from Britain. Fortunately, we have a clear majority over the Eurosceptics who sit on the Opposition Benches and it is just possible that the Bill will be introduced without their support.

**Mr. Boris Johnson** (Henley): Does the Minister really think that the Bill is indispensable for enlargement? From my experience of the Community, it seems to me that it would be perfectly possible to convene an intergovernmental conference tomorrow in Brussels to discuss enlargement issues in the Nice treaty that are completely uncontroversial and without any need to ratify the treaty itself. One could have such a conference tomorrow and get on with enlargement.

**Peter Hain:** The hon. Gentleman is a formidable journalist, but if he imagines that he can convene an intergovernmental conference tomorrow and renegotiate enlargement, he is living in cloud cuckoo land. Britain increased its voting strength in the Council of Ministers under the Nice treaty. We got a better deal than any of the other larger countries; we increased the share of our vote under qualified majority voting. If we reopened the Nice agenda, does the hon. Gentleman believe that that increase, which is embedded in the treaty, subject to ratification, would be left untouched? Of course it would not. Several parties are not happy that Britain's share of the vote increased.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** My hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Johnson) is a formidable journalist, but I do not believe that *The Spectator* had correspondents at the Nice summit. He would otherwise know that the decision on the voting weight was exceedingly controversial and that representatives of several member states threatened to walk out. If the treaty falls through, the whole matter might have to be renegotiated with consequent enormous complications.

**Peter Hain:** The hon. Gentleman is right; I shall continue to take his interventions if he wishes to make them. He makes a valid point: several other countries are extremely upset about the deal to which they agreed and they would desperately like to unravel it. The opposition of the hon. Member for Henley and his colleagues to the Bill would promote that outcome.

**Donald Anderson** (Swansea, East): My right hon. Friend said that his mission was to educate the Opposition. He has shown them that their zealous anti-Europeanism would recklessly annoy many of our friends. However, will he also educate them about the changed attitude of the United States Administration to European security and defence policy? It undermines yet another plank of their anti-Europeanism.

**Peter Hain:** My right hon. Friend is right. The President of the United States has been steadfast in his support for the European security and defence policy. He speaks for the Administration in Washington, and some of the offstage noises to the contrary should be ignored. As I shall make clear later, if I am allowed to get that far, the events of the past month have increased the importance of a European role in security. The progress has been endorsed.

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** Will the Minister give way?

**Peter Hain:** I am sorry, but I shall make some progress before taking any more interesting interventions from the hon. Gentleman.

Enlargement is not a favour that we are doing the candidates. It is a favour we are doing ourselves. Why? It will reunite Europe at long last after the bitter divisions of world war two and the cold war. It will make us safer; war between the EU's members is now unthinkable. By enlarging, the EU will extend stability throughout Europe.

Enlargement will make us richer. Taking in the central Europeans alone will boost British gross domestic product by £1.75 billion. That is an important prize. It will create more jobs for British workers. Enlargement will create thousands of them throughout the UK. It will mean lower prices and greater choice for UK consumers. They will have access to a wider range of products at more competitive prices as the single market is enlarged to become the largest in the world, with a population of nearly 500 million.

It will also make Britain cleaner and greener. Common environmental standards applied in all EU member states, new and old, will reduce the cross-border pollution that affects our skies and rivers.

Enlargement will make our streets safer. Together, the EU member states are tackling cross-border crime, drug smuggling, people trafficking and illegal immigration. If we are to deliver lasting success, we need the candidates inside the EU, working with us on those tasks.

As I said earlier, enlargement is even more important after 11 September. After the horror of that day, we need enlargement more than ever. If we are to defeat the terrorists, we need the bigger, stronger Europe that enlargement will bring. We need the practical co-operation across the continent that enlargement will allow.

Let me explain. On 21 September, European Union leaders agreed on an action plan to fight terror across Europe and beyond. That plan is based on much closer co-operation with the United States, and on much closer co-operation among the EU's member states themselves.

*[Peter Hain]*

We agreed on a European arrest warrant. The warrant will be most effective when it applies not just in the present 15 member states but across Europe, in what are now the candidate countries. It will, when they join. There will be nowhere for the terrorists to hide any more. A common definition of terrorism in each nation's laws was also agreed. When it applies across Europe, as it will when the candidates join, the days when terrorists could avoid justice through legal loopholes will be ended.

We agreed on quicker freezing of assets and evidence, through recognition by each EU member state of others' court orders. When that applies across Europe, as it will when the candidates join, terrorists will no longer be able to hide the funds that pay for their campaigns, or the evidence that will convict them across Europe.

We agreed on better intelligence-sharing between member states. When the candidates are part of that network, as they will be when they join, all Europe's eyes and ears will help to ensure that we can crack and pre-empt planned terrorist action throughout our continent.

Those are important prizes, which enlargement will bring.

**Mr. John Smith** (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my hon. Friend agree that in the fight against terrorism, one of the most important aspects of this treaty is the headline military goals? As has been revealed in recent weeks, many of our NATO allies have not the military capability to contribute to NATO. If the goals within the treaty for the European targets are achieved, the capability will exist.

**Peter Hain:** I am not sure about that, but I take my hon. Friend's general point.

A bigger European Union will mean a stronger European defence policy too—which relates to what my hon. Friend just said. It will mean more troops able to handle the peacekeeping, humanitarian and crisis-management operations that Europe may need to run in the future. It will mean an EU better able to stop the kind of instability, on its borders or further afield, in which terrorists can hide and thrive.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (North-East Fife): I hope that the Minister will not be seduced by the intervention of his hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith)—with whom I often agree, although I do not on this occasion. It would do nothing for the strength of NATO if it were somehow thought that to achieve the headline goals of the European rapid reaction force was equivalent to achieving the objectives of the defence capabilities initiative, and NATO itself.

**Peter Hain:** I take the right hon. and learned Gentleman's point. He usually speaks with great authority, conviction and, indeed, persuasiveness about these matters.

Our biggest weapon of all in the fight against terrorism, however, is not more troops. It is not just better intelligence sharing, and not just enhanced extradition arrangements. It is international solidarity. The member states are showing that: not just Britain but all our European partners gave immediate and unconditional support to the US after 11 September. The European Union is emerging through this crisis as a force to be reckoned with on the global diplomatic stage. It is no longer simply passing resolutions in its Council of Ministers meetings; it has earned a right to be taken seriously in Washington and, indeed, in the rest of the world.

Let us remember that the candidates too have been steadfast in giving unconditional solidarity. They too have voiced their full support to the US, for the anti-terrorist measures that the EU is establishing, and for the broader fight against fear. All—each one—did that voluntarily and immediately. Without being prompted, they demonstrated that, at a critical time internationally, they were already embryonic members of the European Union. We welcome them and commend them for that. We need their support, for this struggle has no boundaries. We need their solidarity; their accession will consolidate it. We need their co-operation; their accession will strengthen it.

What kind of Europe will the candidates join? We want them to join our kind of Europe. We want them to join a practical Europe that delivers real things for real people: jobs, prosperity, cleaner air, safer cars, and the right to live, work and study anywhere inside the European Union. We want them to join an accountable Europe, whose agenda is set by the democratically elected leaders of the member states; an open Europe, which consults its citizens and makes decisions with full transparency.

We want them to join a comprehensible Europe that uses language that people can understand and procedures that they can follow, and a diverse Europe that cherishes the differences between its member states and empowers them all while respecting the national identity of each. We want them to join a Europe that stands in a strong transatlantic alliance with the United States—as it has so steadfastly in the fight against international terrorism, and as it must also do in opening up trade, on conflict prevention, on a new deal for Africa, on humanitarian assistance and in fighting world poverty. That is our kind of Europe. That is the Europe that our Government are building and the Europe that we want the candidates to join.

**Mr. Davidson:** I am grateful to the Minister for giving way again, and I very much agree with him on the merits of enlargement. Does he agree with me and Romano Prodi that, as Mr. Prodi said on 21 June 2001, in *The Irish Times*,

"legally, ratification of the Nice treaty is not necessary for enlargement"?

Does the Minister accept that?

**Peter Hain:** I noticed renewed interest in the debate among Opposition Members when my hon. Friend mentioned Romano Prodi, who is very popular among Opposition Members. Legally we could have an accession treaty with each member state, one by one, and convene an intergovernmental conference to agree that. However, is my hon. Friend seriously suggesting—I hope that he is not—that that is a sensible way to proceed on enlargement?

We need a unified position to address issues such as the common agricultural policy—which the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) raised—security, the single market and the various other issues

raised in the 31 chapters. A single treaty to which each country joining the European Union has to accede makes far more sense than the alternative and is indeed the only practical way of proceeding. That is the only sensible and practical way of pursuing the matter. Legalistically, one could pursue the extremely unlikely strategy that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Davidson) seems to be supporting, but that strategy would never deliver enlargement.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, although it would be perfectly possible to fix in each treaty of accession the number of seats that each new member state would have in the Council of Ministers, it is very hard to see how one could embody in each treaty of accession a voting weight for the current 15 member states?

**Peter Hain:** The hon. Gentleman speaks great common sense on the issue. We are discussing blindingly obvious points. If we want enlargement, Nice is the vehicle by which to achieve it. If we wreck Nice, we will not achieve enlargement.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mrs. Browning:** Will the Minister comment on the Foreign Secretary's comment on this issue in a previous debate? The Foreign Secretary said that

"it is not true in a legal and technical sense that the Nice treaty is necessary for enlargement."—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2001; Vol. 370, c. 287.]

**Peter Hain:** I am answering the same point. Nice is the only realistic, practical and feasible vehicle to achieve enlargement.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Davidson:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Peter Hain:** I shall give way one last time.

**Mr. Davidson:** My right hon. Friend is very generous indeed. Romano Prodi and I are of the view that, as I said,

"legally, ratification of the Nice treaty is not necessary for enlargement."

We would both go on to say:

"It's without any problem up to 20 members, and those beyond 20 members have only to put in the accession agreement some notes of change, some clause. But legally it's not necessary."

As that was in *The Irish Times*, on 21 June 2001, it must be true.

**Peter Hain:** I do not know whether to treat roughly or gently my hon. Friend's remarks, but I shall treat them gently and say that I think that he should study the response made by the Foreign Secretary when he answered that precise point.

**Mr. John Gummer** (Suffolk, Coastal): Does the Minister agree that the mechanism that he is proposing has the advantage of enabling us to underline that Europe is seeking to find a way of working together and a framework within which, by working together, each of us becomes stronger? The alternative does not provide that clear object lesson.

**Peter Hain:** The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right and is speaking sense. The logic that he, like the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), brings to the debate is the only logic that can achieve enlargement. That is the point.

The majority of Conservative Members want to wreck enlargement. It is impossible to achieve enlargement for the first wave of countries by 1 January 2004 by proceeding on some magical mystery tour of individual treaties to be signed one by one on behalf of the accession states. That is simply not feasible.

Those Conservative Members should visit Poland, the Czech Republic, Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Slovenia and all the other countries and tell them that they oppose their desire to join the EU on that date. The Conservatives should tell those states that they do not want an enlarged Europe, that they do not want to reunite Europe. Those countries are desperate to join the European family, and the Government are providing them with a vehicle to do so in this Bill.

I have described the Europe that will be made better for Britain by the Nice treaty. Nice is not the penalty that we have to pay to get to enlargement: it is part of the prize. It is a benefit in its own right for Britain. Why? Because, as we have already explained in the House, Nice will give Britain more power. It will give the UK more votes in the Council relative to the small and medium-sized countries. Nice will extend qualified majority voting where that is in Britain's interests—in the single market or to deliver a more efficient EU. It will preserve unanimity for decision making on key areas of national interest, including tax, social security, defence, the EU's own resources, border controls and treaty change—just like we said we would achieve.

Nice will reform the European courts to enable them to cut delays in the exercise of justice, which can penalise British interests. Nice will reform the Commission. It will make it smaller: there will be only one Commissioner per member state from 2005, and once the EU reaches 27, fewer than one. Nice will make the Commission more efficient. It will give the Commission President—the great buddy of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok—new powers to organise the Commission and sack individual Commissioners if necessary. Nice will make the EU more flexible. It will make it easier for groups of member states to act together without requiring all to join in, or undercutting the single market.

So Nice and enlargement are both in our interests. Both are necessary and both are urgent. The task now is to press on with the ratification of Nice.

**David Cairns** (Greenock and Inverclyde): On the point about the benefits to Britain, has my right hon. Friend received representations from British business on the desirability of enlargement? What assessment has he made of the benefits to British business and jobs of achieving enlargement as quickly as possible?

**Peter Hain:** My hon. Friend is right. We have had discussions with British businesses, many of whom have taken advantage of the period before enlargement to visit

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those countries to obtain new markets and contracts, and the jobs that those will bring. Thousands of jobs will be created in Britain as a result of enlargement. It is estimated that 300,000 jobs have been created across the European Union member states as they are currently constituted, just by bringing in the first wave of enlargement. Enlargement will bring enormous opportunities for British businesses, jobs and prosperity.

We must press on with the enlargement negotiations, to conclude on schedule by the end of 2002, so that new members can join by mid-2004 at the latest. We hope that they will be able to join by 1 January if possible, to deliver the Europe we all want. That is a challenging agenda. It can be achieved, but only if all of us, including the UK, the other member states and the candidate countries—it would be nice to include the Opposition, too—make every effort to achieve it . There can be no more obstacles and no more excuses for delay on any side.

I have explained why we brought the Bill to the House soon after we were returned to office. The Bill is necessary for a treaty that, in turn, is necessary for enlargement on time and in a sensible form. All member states agree that the enlarged EU we want cannot work effectively without the changes that Nice will make to the EU's institutions and procedures.

All member states agree that Nice is necessary for enlargement. All member states also agree that Nice is all that is necessary for enlargement and that once Nice is ratified the EU will have completed all the institutional changes necessary for the accession of the new member states. That is the point. Nice will complete all the changes necessary—instead of a shambolic, treaty by treaty approach that would never reach a conclusion—and that is why the other member states support Nice. That is why the candidates support it. That is why the Government support it. That is why we brought the Bill to the House. That is why I urge the House to support the Bill today, and the stronger, safer Europe that it will help to build for Britain. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.5 pm

**Mr. Michael Ancram** (Devizes): It is some years since I faced the Minister at the Dispatch Box, and in those days he was a Minister at the Welsh Office. I am delighted that his breathtaking arrogance has not been altered by his promotion to the Foreign Office.

I come late to the legislative process on this Bill, which has now reached Third Reading. However, the jockey may have changed but the horse remains the same—although I hope that this slightly heavier jockey will not injure it. Moreover, it is clear that I shall have to learn the niceties of behaviour in the Chamber on this Bill. I was interested to note that, during his speech, the Minister was subject to friendly fire that came symmetrically from both sides of the Chamber.

The Opposition oppose this Bill, as we have done throughout its passage through the House. I shall ask my hon. Friends to vote against it tonight, for two reasons. First, we believe that the treaty agreed at Nice fails to achieve even the aims set out by the Government. Secondly, it fails to advance the vision of a flexible Europe that lies at the heart our policy. We believe that that flexibility is essential to the successful enlargement of the European Union, as we wish to see it.

We have always been in favour of enlargement. The Minister related a litany of all the benefits that would accrue from enlargement, which by and large I welcome, as they are broadly the same as those that we have identified. However, they are not what the Nice treaty is about—a subject to which I shall return.

We have long argued for a more flexible Europe, yet—as has happened again today—the unsubstantiated response that we receive when we do so is that we are flying in the face of achieving greater strength through political integration. Much of the debate on this Bill has centred on those two different basic positions.

It is worth pausing to consider those differing positions in the light of the current international situation. Europe is an essential part of the coalition that has been put together so painstakingly in the fight against international terrorism. As it happens, the European Union's ability to contribute constructively to the coalition has depended not on further integration but on the flexibility that currently exists in Europe. The Nice treaty, and other initiatives, would reduce that flexibility.

That flexibility has allowed our partners in the EU to be part of what has effectively been a layered coalition, with different levels of participation and, even, enthusiasm. If the supporters of integration had had their way—if the implied common foreign and defence policies had been established—would it have been possible for the Prime Minister to attach himself so firmly to the American cause? Would he have been able to sign up so readily to the longer-term objectives of the fight against international terrorism, and could he have committed armed forces to the military phase in Afghanistan? I think that the answer to those questions is: almost certainly not.

**Mike Gapes:** Does the right hon. Gentleman think that the remarks of Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi were helpful in building the coalition? Does he think that it would be in the interests of European unity—or of the Conservative party—for his party to continue its discussions with far-right former fascists in Italy?

**Mr. Ancram:** I am not certain what those questions have to do with the debate. I am making it clear that the coalition works because all partners are not being asked to give precisely the same response. I am sure that the Minister, if he has met Ministers from around Europe, will be aware of that. That is what flexibility means. The lowest-common-denominator approach that would have been adopted otherwise would almost certainly have restrained the valuable support that the Prime Minister has been able to give the USA. Almost certainly, it would have prevented military engagement by forces from the UK, France or Germany, and it would have militated against the best interests of this country in the fight against international terrorism.

**Mr. John Smith:** Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the reasons for a layered response within Europe—probably the most important one—is the variation in the military capability of NATO allies in Europe and the fact that some could not contribute to the extent that we did? The headline goals in the treaty will help those assets to be developed within NATO as well as within Europe.

**Mr. Ancram:** I was with the hon. Gentleman until his last phrase, because that is precisely my argument about

flexibility. That is one reason why we believe that a flexible Europe is a stronger Europe, better placed to take on the enlargement that we all seek. The events of the past weeks have underlined the strength of flexibility, which is an asset that should not lightly be thrown away.

**Roger Casale:** In the right hon. Gentleman's pursuit of greater flexibility within the European Union, is he limiting himself to opposing the treaty of Nice or would he, if he could, unpick previous treaties such as Amsterdam and Maastricht and even the Single European Act? Where does it stop?

**Mr. Ancram:** We are dealing with the Nice treaty. However, we have made it clear throughout the debates on the Bill that we would have liked the Nice negotiations to be used to return certain powers to national Governments. That would be in the interests of a stronger Europe. People feel disconnected from what is happening in Europe, and I believe that that is one way to deal with that. I shall come to that in greater detail shortly.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** I hope that when my right hon. Friend does so he will explain why he thinks we should reject the Nice treaty on the basis that it does not provide us with sufficient flexibility, when in fact it makes provision for enhanced co-operation to be extended and developed.

**Mr. Ancram:** If this were an à-la-carte Bill, we could pick the bits that we thought were better for Europe and say no to the rest. However, we cannot do that, as the Minister says—we have to take this lock, stock and barrel, and we happen not to like the stock and the barrel. That is why I will be asking my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the Bill tonight.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Ancram:** I would like to make some progress, but will give way later.

Nice was, in our view, a missed opportunity. It was a chance to create greater flexibility, to give powers back to national Parliaments and to create a closer connection, through those Parliaments, between the institutions of Europe and the people of Europe.

The debates on the Bill have all been conducted in the shadow of the Irish referendum. That referendum and its result cannot be ignored; it was symptomatic of people's feeling of alienation from Europe, which has been growing ever since the Maastricht treaty was signed. Nice was an opportunity to address that and find a way of reconnecting with people. The Minister said that that was one of his aims, but I do not believe that it has been achieved. It could have been a way of showing the disillusionment felt by so many at what they understandably see to be the immutability of European-made law, but the opportunity was missed.

The Government went to Nice with no clear view of the Europe they were seeking ultimately to achieve. To put it bluntly, they were ill prepared. They indicated before they went that they would not give way on qualified majority voting and then promptly did so when they got there. Now they do not seem to be able to make up their mind as to whether the areas of QMV that they conceded are unimportant or essential to the future workings of the European Union. They appear to be trying to play this both ways but they cannot do so. The extension of QMV was a further move towards integration.

The Government declared that they would not undermine NATO through the approval of the rapid reaction force, and then signed up to a report in the annexe to the treaty that clearly does so. They claimed that in approving the inclusion of the charter of fundamental rights as an annexe they would be doing more than agreeing its principles. Now there is every indication that they signed up to something very much more.

Suffice it to say that, in each case, the Conservative party gave the Government due warning. They chose to ignore those warnings. Tonight we will try once more. The Bill seeks to ratify a treaty that failed to achieve the Government's objectives. It flies in the face of our vision of a flexible Europe, and it is increasingly integrationist.

The strongest arguments made for Nice, which the Minister made again this afternoon, was that it enabled enlargement of the European Union to take place. Our opposition to it has been inaccurately described as anti-enlargement. I stress that nothing could be further from the truth. We are the long-standing and very committed supporters of enlargement. We were pursuing enlargement in 1990—11 years ago. We have always believed that the European Union should welcome the new democracies that emerged from behind the iron curtain at that time. That would not only bind them into the European family of democracies, but enhance the concept of the flexible Europe of nations of which we are a natural part and which has always been at the heart of our European policy.

Throughout this process, therefore, we have made it clear that we remain strong supporters of enlargement and that we would accept immediately those aspects of Nice that relate to enlargement, such as Commission size, which has been mentioned, and vote re-weighting. That remains our position, but this legislation does not allow us to do so. It would ratify a treaty that contains much more to do with integration, which carries within it the disincentive to enlargement, and much less that is central to the enlargement that we seek.

**Roger Casale:** If the treaty of Nice fell, what is the earliest date at which enlargement of the European Union could take place?

**Mr. Ancram:** I will deal with the treaty of Nice, which is an important point in view of the Irish referendum. We have not had an answer from the Minister on that. We have been told again today that the treaty is necessary for enlargement. Until the Irish referendum, that was the firm position of the Government.

The Labour party election manifesto claimed that

"it is vital that we ratify the treaty of Nice which is essential to enlargement".

Those were the two key words—vital and essential. Like so much of that manifesto, we now discover that that is at best a distortion of the truth and that Nice is not necessary for enlargement, as my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Johnson) said.

**Dr. Stephen Ladyman** (South Thanet): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Ancram:** When I have finished this point.

Since 7 June, with our general election out of the way and the Irish referendum results staring the Government in the eye, the European Commission has had to admit the truth. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Davidson), who has now left the Chamber, questioned the Minister and quoted to him what President Romano Prodi told *The Irish Times* on 21 June:

"Legally, ratification of the Nice Treaty is not necessary for enlargement".

Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Henley also pointed out to the Minister that the Foreign Secretary told Parliament on the next day:

"It is true that a treaty is necessary for enlargement; it is not true in a legal and technical sense that the Nice treaty is necessary for enlargement."

He then said:

"We would have to have an alternative treaty."—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2001; Vol. 370, c. 287.]

He did not tell us at that stage that we would have to have a series of treaties, which the Minister sprang on us today. I suspect that if he checks with his advisers he will find that one treaty would secure the accession and enlargement that is necessary.

There we have it. Nice is not and never was necessary for enlargement or capable of affecting it on its own.

**Mr. Doug Henderson** (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I understand the right hon. Gentleman's argument, but does he believe that the countries that are seeking to join an enlarged European Union will understand those arguments? Does he not see a risk that they might think that British Conservatives are more concerned with the minutiae and with their own interests than with building bridges with other countries in Europe? At this time, is that not a dangerous signal to send to other partners beyond Europe?

**Mr. Ancram:** The hon. Gentleman will have to speak for his party and its relationships with those countries. We have been in contact with them and they understand our position. In many cases, they understand our concerns, which would affect them if they continued with their applications for accession.

**Dr. Ladyman** *rose—*

**Mr. Ancram:** I will give way in a moment. I keep on being asked what will happen about accession if the treaty is not ratified, but what will happen if the Irish continue to vote against ratification? At the time of the referendum, many people thought that that was the end of the treaty. That was not the line being taken by Commissioners in Europe or by the Government earlier. I want to hear a categorical answer from the Minister. If the Irish do not ratify the Nice treaty, is he saying that enlargement will be impossible, or that there are other ways of achieving it?

**Peter Hain:** Legally, the treaty has to be ratified by all 15 member states, as the right hon. Gentleman very well knows.

**Mr. Ancram:** I shall ask the question again. Is the Minister saying that if that treaty is not ratified by the Irish, accession and enlargement cannot take place? That is a very straightforward question; I ask him to give me an answer.

**Peter Hain:** I have already answered it. The answer is, in the terms of this treaty, yes. The treaty cannot proceed—enlargement cannot proceed—unless all member states endorse it. The right hon. Gentleman wants us to follow the same course: to put another roadblock in the way of enlargement. That is what he wants to do.

**Mr. Ancram:** I want to get this clearly on the record, because the Minister is now saying that if the Irish continue to refuse to ratify the treaty of Nice, enlargement is finished. It is not what has been said previously, so it is interesting to hear it being said now. I give the Minister a chance to correct himself if he is wrong, but that is what he has put before the House today: that if the Irish continue to say no, enlargement is ended. Is that right? The Minister does not know.

**Mr. Robert Jackson** *rose—*

**Mr. Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) *rose—*

**Mr. Ancram:** I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson).

**Mr. Jackson:** Does my right hon. Friend consider that the effect of a negative vote in the House on Third Reading would help or hinder the Irish people in deciding to ratify the Nice treaty and enable enlargement to take place?

**Mr. Ancram:** I must say, with great friendliness to my hon. Friend, that I spent some time dealing with the Irish people, in Northern Ireland and in the south, and I learned very early on not to try to tell the Irish people what to do. I doubt whether they would listen, particularly to what is being said in the House. They will continue, as they always do, robustly to make up their own minds.

**Dr. Ladyman** *rose—*

**Mr. Bryant** *rose—*

**Mr. Ancram:** I want to make progress; then I will give way.

We need to take the argument further, because Nice failed to address the single biggest obstacle to enlargement: the unreformed common agricultural policy. The truth is that enlargement cannot succeed with the CAP as it stands, and I believe that the Minister would agree with that—he is nodding.

Agriculture currently absorbs nearly 50 per cent. of the European budget—the Minister provided my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) with an answer that says that the figure is just under 50 per cent. at the moment—but if Poland acceded, that figure would rise to 85 per cent. Therefore CAP reform must be a necessary precursor to enlargement, yet at Nice it was totally ignored. That treaty—that negotiation—which was to do with enlargement, did not deal with the single most important precursor to enlargement.

That precursor will continue to be ignored. The Minister talks about accession by 2004, but he should read what President Chirac said last week. He said, with an eye to his own domestic political requirements, that as far as he was concerned there would be no reform of the CAP until 2006. I should like to place on the record what he said, because we can speculate in the House, but we know that if there is no reform of the CAP, enlargement is in danger to a far greater degree than anything that my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage has suggested.

President Chirac said:

"On this plan, I would like to say first of all that, because it is an important point, and because it is not bad that the world should know the clearly expressed position of the French authorities, we are absolutely opposed, and we will do everything to oppose, a re-opening of the agreement of Berlin, that is to say a redefinition, a reform of the common agricultural policy before 2006."

Effectively, he is saying—this is another challenge to the Minister—that the precursor to enlargement will not occur because the French will not allow it to happen. What is the Minister's answer then, in terms of enlargement? How does he deal with that?

**Peter Hain:** The answer, for the record, is that common agricultural policy reform is not necessary for enlargement. It is not necessary: it is desirable. It is not technically necessary, however. In any case, the treaty does not deal with common agricultural policy reform. [HON. MEMBERS: "Exactly."] Exactly so. That is being proceeded with on a separate road; it has already started, as a result of the British initiative, and will continue. There is, as the right hon. Gentleman well knows, an agricultural chapter, which must be negotiated, state by state, in order for the accession of each of those states to be ratified, and that is one of the next sections of the enlargement process down the road.

**Mr. Ancram:** Although I am new to this particular legislation, I am again astounded by the Minister's attitude. Is he really suggesting that the common agricultural policy does not matter as far as enlargement is concerned? How will an enlarged Community or Union pay for itself without a reformed common agricultural policy? Is he suggesting—

**Mr. Robert Jackson** *rose—*

**Mr. Ancram:** I will allow my hon. Friend to help the Minister in a moment, but I should like to ask the Minister the question first. Is he seriously suggesting that we could have an enlarged Community or Union of the sort that we are talking about without a reform of the common agricultural policy, and believe that it would work?

**Peter Hain:** I have given the answer to the right hon. Gentleman on several occasions. The treaty does not include reform of the CAP. Legally under the treaty, agricultural reform is not necessary for those countries to ratify the treaty to enable their accession and, therefore, for enlargement to occur. Has he understood that point?

**Mr. Ancram** *indicated assent.*

**Peter Hain:** As I have already said, of course, such reform is desirable. That is why we have already started a process of reform—it began in 1999, and it will continue. In the meantime, 10 of the 12 applicants have already opened the chapter on agriculture, and those negotiations will proceed.

**Mr. Ancram:** The right hon. Gentleman gives us the answer that reform is not legally necessary, but only about half an hour ago he said that his view of Europe was a practical one. How will an enlarged EU be paid for without reforming the CAP? He should take further advice from his officials on that point because, once again, he is in danger of misleading the House. I shall now give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage; I promised him that I would.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** My right hon. Friend is a true friend of enlargement—indeed, I agree with that point of view—but it seems absolutely clear to me, and I hope that this will commend itself on reflection to my right hon. Friend, that to put the agriculture issue on the table before enlargement would effectively prevent enlargement from happening, because to do so would call forth vetoes from all the member states that have a great stake in the existing structure of the CAP. The significance of 2006 is that it is the year in which it has been agreed that negotiations will take place on whether to increase the own-resources ceiling. That is a point at which we could exercise our veto to enable reform of the CAP to take place.

**Mr. Ancram:** To return to the racehorse analogy with which I started, at some risk, my hon. Friend may be dealing with carts and horses, rather than with two things that have to run alongside each other. I am asking the Minister an important question: without having done the work on reform of the CAP, how can he know that it will slot in at the time of accession; and can he actually say that the EU will be financed? That is very difficult to answer in the affirmative, and he has not sought to do so.

**Dr. Ladyman:** I should like to deal with the other side of the coin. If we were to take the right hon. Gentleman's argument to its logical conclusion—throwing out the Nice treaty and achieving enlargement by different means, thereby delaying it until 2006—the cost to British non-agricultural business would be nearly £4 billion, according to the figures that he has accepted as representing the benefit of enlargement. Is he prepared to pay that price?

**Mr. Ancram:** I have never said that I want to delay enlargement until 2006. I was saying that one of the great co-operative leaders in the EU—one of the partners—has said that he is not prepared to change the CAP until 2006. So the hon. Gentleman's question is better addressed to him than to us. We have made it clear throughout that it is taking far too long for enlargement to happen. We want it to happen as quickly as possible; we are not the obstructionists. We will not be led down the path to further political integration behind the smokescreen that has been raised about enlargement.

I am happy to admit that we do not support further political integration. Indeed, we believe that it will only further alienate people from the institutions and processes of the EU. We have long made clear our view that further political integration will create a one-size-fits-all Europe, which would seriously undermine the basis for the

*[Mr. Ancram]*

sustainable, prosperous and harmonious Europe, in all its diversity, that is our aim. In pursuit of that, we would want some powers to be returned to national Parliaments, where the national interests can be most effectively pursued. That does not mean that we are anti-European, as our opponents like to suggest.

I had an Italian grandmother; I am by blood a European, but my belief in Europe is one of a Europe of nations, which are happy to be part of Europe so long as we retain our basic national rights of self-determination. The simple fact is that political integration is the enemy of an enduring community of nation states. It cannot be argued that the treaty of Nice was not integrationist. It includes several integrationist measures, including the extension of qualified majority voting, to which I have already referred.

**Mr. Bill Rammell** (Harlow) *rose—*

**Mr. Mark Hendrick** (Preston): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Ancram:** I shall make some progress; I have given way often.

Extended QMV will make it even more difficult for our Government to block measures that are not in our national interest, and we should never forget that that is what we are all elected by our constituents to the House to serve. We have consistently opposed the extension of QMV for many years. We did so in our 1997 manifesto, and we continue to oppose it now.

This is part of the salami-slicing tactics by which integration proceeds and national self-determination is diminished. We believe that the salami has been sliced through quite far enough.

Yet alongside the treaty in the annexe lie two further integrationist initiatives. First, I shall deal with the charter on fundamental rights. The European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs, Antonio Vitorino, said in Lisbon on 13 May 2000:

"The Charter will mark a definitive change in the Community which will move it away from the essentially economic raison d'être of its origins to become a full political union."

That is what the Commissioner believes; we could not have put it better ourselves.

The Government may seek to belittle the importance of the charter and I am sure that they will insist that they will block its incorporation in 2004. We shall have to wait and see, but the fact that it is integrationist cannot be doubted. In its extradition measures, it would increase the chances of interference in the ability of a democratically accountable British Government and politically accountable Ministers to act against threats. Instead, it would put decisions in the hands of unaccountable European judges. It would operate alongside the European Court of Justice, thus creating two sets of integrationist judges. Even unincorporated, it would undoubtedly affect the judgments of the court, which will seek inspiration from it as it does from other fundamental rights instruments.

The Commission's report on the legal nature of the charter of fundamental rights of the European Union was published on 18 October 2000. It states:

"It can reasonably be expected that the Charter will become mandatory through the Court's interpretation of it as belonging to the general principles of European Law".

As a Scottish lawyer, I look to the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell), who also shares the distinction of being qualified in the Scottish law. Like me, he will remember the strengthened force of principles in the Scottish law, which, after all, is part of the European tradition. When the report uses the word "principles", I believe that they have special significance.

**Mr. Wayne David** (Caerphilly): Surely much of what the right hon. Gentleman said about the charter is redundant because, as the Government have made clear and as is clear in the treaty, it is a political declaration.

**Mr. Ancram:** I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has listened to what I and the Commission have said. The courts will take inspiration from the charter in the way that they take inspiration from other fundamental rights instruments. The courts, in their interpretation, will ensure that what is in the charter will, in practice, become law. The charter is integrationist and interventionist.

The second initiative is the report on European security and defence policy, which discuses how the rapid reaction force will relate to NATO. I will leave the more detailed analysis of that to my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk, who will wind up for the Opposition. However, although we have long supported the concept of pan-European defence co-operation in pursuit of the Petersberg tasks, we have firmly registered our opposition to the proposed rapid reaction force and we will continue to do so.

If ever the importance of NATO, and of our relations with the USA within it, has been clearly demonstrated, it is now. We must do nothing that would undermine the value of those relations within NATO. However, the rapid reaction force would endanger those relationships at this time.

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I share some of the right hon. Gentleman's concerns, but members of the Foreign Affairs Committee have just returned from a two-day trip to meet representatives of the Belgian presidency, and we talked to members of NATO yesterday. No one there sees any threat at all. Can he substantiate his fears when even NATO does not have them?

**Mr. Ancram:** We must consider not just the present but the future of such a proposal. Essentially, what is being proposed are the beginnings of a European army. The proposal already envisages a command, logistics and planning structure independent of NATO and the ability to act without the approval of NATO. That would undermine the relationship that I have mentioned.

**Mr. John Smith** *rose—*

**Mrs. Browning** *rose—*

**Mr. Ancram:** I shall give way for the last time to my hon. Friend.

**Mrs. Browning:** Is not the real problem the fact that the Prime Minister has persuaded the United States that

the proposal is totally benign in terms of NATO's command and control and planning? General Jean-Pierre Kelche, the French chief of staff, has said clearly that the annexe of the presidency report was deliberately worded to rule out any interpretation that would give NATO a decision-making priority. Is it not the case that the Prime Minister has spun the Americans a line that does not reflect what is in the treaty?

**Mr. Ancram:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that. My point, which is important, is that we have to deal with realities, and the reality is to be found in the document to which she refers. It makes it clear that the dangers of the rapid reaction force undermining relationships within NATO are considerable. We must take that into account.

Third Reading is not the time to consider at length the future of Europe and the lead-up to the intergovernmental conference in 2004, but the Bill and the Nice treaty prompt certain questions about it. It is our strong belief that the integrationist agenda is the wrong approach for a diverse, enlarged Europe. Indeed, it is precisely that approach that has slowed down enlargement.

We will issue positive and constructive proposals for the IGC and reject the old-fashioned bloc mentality within which the Government are fixed. Through the concept of a flexible Europe, we will pursue a Europe of deregulation and decentralisation and seek a Europe that will be best placed to prosper in an increasingly globalised world. We will challenge the Government to produce their own positive vision, to which the Minister referred but on which he did not enlarge. I reiterate the challenge that if the Nice treaty is ratified, a White Paper should be published on its effects.

In the aftermath of the Irish referendum, we will oppose the Bill. The time has come to stop being driven by officials in Brussels and to start listening to the people of Europe again. They want enlargement; so do we. They want decision making closer to them; so do we. They want a Europe that is relevant to their needs; so do we. What is important is that there is still time to achieve that, which is why I invite the House to join us in voting against Third Reading.

4.36 pm

**Denzil Davies** (Llanelli): My right hon. Friend the Minister dealt mainly with enlargement. and I do not criticism him for that. The Bill is, technically, the vehicle by which the provisions of the treaty of Nice will be incorporated into UK domestic law. Like most European treaties that we sometimes debate, the Nice treaty continues and accelerates the process of European integration and the transfer of power from the democracy of the House to the central institutions of the European Union.

Perhaps the Nice treaty is not as extensive as the treaty of Maastricht or the treaty of Amsterdam, but it continues the process that, over the past 30 years, has gradually denuded the democratic powers of all EU member states. We should not be surprised by that because that is what ever closer union means. The EU's powers are not conjured out of the ether somewhere in the sky; they come from the powers of the democratic member states of that union.

If we consider the treaties, as European institutions and their staff sometimes do, the main loser is usually the House. The winner in this case is the European Parliament. The treaty of Nice gives it the power of veto, which adds insult to injury. As I mentioned to the Minister when the Bill was debated in Committee, the European Parliament is to be given the power of veto on some decisions that are made by the Council of Ministers. Although the power is not referred to as a veto—it is not the right type of word—"co-decision" is mentioned. We would be happy to have co-decision-making powers with the Council of Ministers, but the treaty removes those powers from the Government and the House.

**Mr. David:** Co-decision-making is not new. There is a modest extension of that power, but it has been in existence for a long time.

**Denzil Davies:** I did not say that it had not; I am merely relating my remarks to the treaty. My hon. Friend knows that it grants powers of veto to the European Parliament. It also removes powers of veto from this Parliament and affects the way in which the Government cast their votes in the Council of Ministers. The European Parliament gains powers of veto while this House loses powers of veto. The European Court of Justice does well out of the treaty, as does the Council of Ministers, in its newer form as a collegiate or collective body. Perhaps I can return to that point in a few minutes.

The national veto will be taken away in about 30 policy areas. As I argued in previous debates, the reason for the veto—or the unanimity rule, to give it another name—in many international and supranational bodies is to protect the democracy of the nation state. It is there to bridge the gap between decisions taken, more and more globally, in not only the European Union but other supranational bodies. However, that gap seems to be getting wider, which is a matter for real concern.

**Mr. Bryant:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Denzil Davies:** I will finish my argument.

The veto exists to bridge the gap between decisions taken globally, internationally or supranationally and the needs and requirements of accountability and local and national democracy. That is why most international or supranational institutions require the unanimity rule. In these days, when that gap is getting wider, surely it is a retrograde step to try to do away with the rule of unanimity.

**Mr. Bryant:** As far as I understand the matter, my right hon. Friend poses two philosophical opposites that are not in fact opposites at all. He says that the rule of unanimity must be preserved, but that unanimity is anti-democratic because it means that only a few can determine the arrangements for everybody, whereas democracy has always preserved the rights of the majority, pure and simple.

**Denzil Davies:** My argument is that when a nation state is represented in a supranational body, the rule of unanimity generally applies. I was merely saying that the reason for that is to keep a link between the democracy of the nation state and decisions taken globally that may

*[Denzil Davies]*

be in the interests of more than one country. That is why it is preferable that there should be a rule of unanimity in those cases.

The veto is, frankly, incompatible with the European goal of ever closer union. The veto has to go, because ever closer union can be achieved and advanced ultimately only at the expense of the democracy of the nation state. In the 30 or so policy areas in which the veto will disappear, the British electorate may in future have laws imposed on them that have been passed by the votes of Governments whom they have not elected. The votes of the British Government, whom they have elected, will be overruled by the votes of Governments whom they have not elected and, in some cases, by the votes of Governments whom they would perhaps never elect. I do not want to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mike Gapes), who made some remarks about Mr. Berlusconi. However, the democratically elected Governments of other countries may one day be able to pass laws for the electorate of Britain who have not elected those Governments.

I do not know whether any Scottish lawyers are present who could tell us whether that is a novel constitutional principle. I do not remember it being in Dicey's "Law of the Constitution" when I read it many years ago. It may have happened before, but it seems to me to be a change. If we do away with the veto and move towards qualified majority voting, Governments who have not been elected by the British people may pass laws for the British people.

**Mr. Hendrick:** I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way when he was about to finish speaking. He made the point that the European Parliament was gaining powers of co-decision or, in his terms, veto, and was making decisions. He says that Governments of other nations are making European laws. Does he accept that the European Parliament is directly elected by the peoples of Europe, and that if they have a part in that decision making it is not purely and simply other Governments who are passing those laws?

**Denzil Davies:** Of course the European Parliament sometimes agrees laws for the whole of Europe, but I was referring to the nation state and the democracy of our nation state. If a proposition is made in the Council of Ministers and is carried by the votes of Governments other than the British Government, who vote against the proposition, and a law is made as a result of that vote, that law will be imposed on the British electorate, who will not have elected the people who actually passed that law. I do not know whether that is a novel constitutional principle; perhaps we can return to that issue at another time.

I do not know where it will lead us, but I consider it ironic that when the veto is abolished, power shifts in a curious way from the nation state to the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers was always intended to be the body that represented the democracy of the nation state, but over the past few years it has become a sort of collective or collegiate body. The other institutions of the European Union have criticised the development of the Council of Ministers into a collegiate body with a personality of its own. That has been revealed in the attempts to bypass other institutions in the so-called pillars—the second and third pillars affected by the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties.

I think that the motives behind that development were good: Ministers and Governments felt that there was a democratic deficit in the EU and they wanted to redress that in some way, by increasing the powers, profile and bureaucracy of the Council of Ministers. However, in doing so they have made it into a collegiate body with a personality of its own.

Every time the veto is taken away and replaced with qualified majority voting, the Council of Ministers is backed further into the position of being unable to defend the democracy of the member state. Ultimately, even within the Council of Ministers, the veto is not compatible with current developments, because it cannot be allowed in a union in which constant progress has to be made towards an ever closer union.

We are told that the veto is to go in 30 policy areas. The Government argue that its loss does not matter in some cases because the policy areas involved are trivial, and in other cases it is not in the national interest to keep the veto. I have three points to make about that.

First, many of the areas so affected are not trivial. We discussed that in the Committee of the whole House, but I shall list some of those areas now. The rules on EU structural funds are not a trivial matter, nor is economic and social cohesion outside the structural funds. Implementation of agreed foreign policy, joint actions and common positions is not a trivial matter, nor is trade in services or intellectual property rights. The issue of who is to negotiate for the Community with, for example, the World Trade Organisation, is not trivial. The appointment of the head of foreign policy—its supremo—is not a trivial matter, nor is external representation of economic and monetary union. The implementation of rules on visas, issues relating to asylum, refugees and illegal immigration, and measures of co-operation in justice and home affairs are not trivial matters.

Secondly, even if those matters are currently perceived to be trivial, or even if worrying too much about the veto is not currently perceived to be in the national interest, circumstances change. Let me give an example. During debate on the Maastricht treaty, some of us tried to discuss whether it was possible for a member state, once it had subscribed to monetary union and signed up to the single currency, to finance a war. Those who spent a lot of time on the treaty will remember that it prohibits the printing of money, or words to that effect. In future, the situation may change. In the case of the Maastricht treaty, would this country not be able to finance a war if other countries in the monetary union did not wish to participate in it? That is one factor. Circumstances change, and policy areas that the Minister and the Government dismiss as trivial or not in the national interest could change. Once the power of the veto is entrenched in the acquis communautaire, that is the end of the matter; it cannot be retrieved or changed. However, states will come back and ask for more—next time, it will be taxation, social security or defence. The veto is not compatible with ever closer union.

The veto is also done away with in the proposal for enhanced co-operation. The French have a much better phrase for enhanced co-operation, which they translate as the "avant-garde". It was established by the Amsterdam

treaty, which proposed that countries outside the potential inner core should have a veto. However, that did not satisfy France and Germany, which wanted to go ahead and establish the avant-garde, so, after only a few years, the veto on enhanced co-operation has gone and, subject to the conditions of the treaty, several countries can now go ahead.

The avant-garde policy has been well described by European statesmen. Mr. Fischer, the German Foreign Minister, gave a speech on 12 May 2000 at Humboldt university in Berlin, in which he said:

"The last step will then be the completion of integration in a European Federation . . . such a group of States"—

I assume that Mr. Fischer was referring to the avant-garde—

"would conclude a new European framework treaty, the nucleus of the constitution of the Federation. On the basis of this treaty, the Federation would develop its own institutions, establish a government which, within the EU, should speak with one voice."

A month later, Jacques Delors put it much more concisely, as one would expect. On 17 June, he told a French newspaper:

"We will have to create an avant-garde . . . We could have a union for the enlarged Europe and a Federation for the avant-garde."

That is what will happen; that will be the result of losing the veto even on the establishment of enhanced co-operation.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** With reference to the debate sparked off by Foreign Minister Fischer's remarks, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House about the letter that Mr. Fischer received from the French Foreign Minister explaining precisely why his proposals for a federal Europe were mistaken?

**Denzil Davies:** I am not party to Mr. Fischer's correspondence—I was merely quoting from an interesting and open speech. At least he was honest, which is more than can be said, unfortunately, for many British politicians in relation to the EU. Mr. Fischer's interesting views may not have been German Government policy, but, as I tried to show, they were echoed by Jacques Delors, a distinguished President of the Commission and a clear thinker.

The pressure is now on. The veto has gone. The pressure will be, in Jacques Delors's words, to create a federation of the avant-garde. Given the enthusiasm of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for such matters, Britain will have to be part of that, will it not?

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will be in there with the Foreign Office, punching our weight, or punching above our weight—I am not sure; I stand to be corrected. Punching above our weight all the time must get a little tiring. We will certainly be in there, punching our weight as part of the federation of the avant-garde. That will mean more integration still.

The train rolls on, discarding national vetoes and national democracies as it goes along. The next pressure will come from joining the inner core. As my right hon. Friend the Minister said, the Government will easily win the vote this evening, but before the ink is dry on the Royal Assent, work will begin—it probably has begun—on the next treaty. Happily or unhappily, before 2004 we will be debating the next legislation incorporating the treaty of 2004 into the law of the United Kingdom. That will be an integrationist treaty, like the present treaty and most past treaties.

**Dr. Ladyman:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Denzil Davies:** No, I am coming to an end.

Perhaps before long the member states of Europe will call a halt to the process, but they had better do it soon. If not, there will not be much left to halt.

4.56 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (North-East Fife): I do not propose to delay the House over-long, as I confess that I do not have anything very new to say about the Bill. As some of the contributions so far have suggested, albeit that they were couched in elegant and even intellectual language, there is not much more to be said by many others, either. The speech of the shadow Foreign Secretary echoed some of the elegant contributions made by the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) during the various stages of the Bill's progress.

As we know, we are having the Third Reading today, after the summer recess, although it could quite easily have been held before the summer recess. However, an internal decision had to be taken in the Conservative party, and there were those who thought that the nature of that decision might determine their attitude this evening. That, as we now know, is not the case.

So far in the debate, we have traversed some pretty old ground. We heard from the shadow Foreign Secretary—who is no longer in his place, but who explained to me that he had another pressing engagement—that he had an Italian grandmother, which made him European. Well, I have a Glaswegian grandmother, which still makes me European. We should recognise that our Europeanism is determined not by the exotic nature of our relations, but rather by the fact that we are firmly embedded in the European tradition. In particular, the Scots law to which the right hon. Gentleman referred is, of course, a European legal system based on Roman Dutch law. Large parts of our life are firmly embedded in Europe, and the sooner we recognise that, the better.

The shadow Foreign Secretary was at pains to suggest that President Bush, whose perspicacity, maturity and sound common sense have been generally commended in the House in recent debates, had somehow been the subject of an exercise in duplicity by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The right hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways: President George W. Bush cannot be a great leader and at the same time a dupe of the British Prime Minister. The two are wholly incompatible. As was pointed out in an intervention, at NATO, where one might think that there would be real anxiety about anything that might undermine its effectiveness, there is no such apprehension as has now and previously been expressed from the Conservative Benches.

I should like to make one point about the rapid reaction force, returning to comments that I addressed to the Minister following an intervention by the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith). If we have a poor rapid reaction force, and the headline goals are not achieved and capability does not become an important part of what is done, we will damage NATO. A successful rapid reaction force will most certainly strengthen NATO.

*[Mr. Menzies Campbell]*

I suspect that many hon. Members share my anxiety that there does not seem yet to be sufficient commitment to providing financial support to ensure the military capability that will be necessary if we are to achieve either the levels required by the headline goals of the rapid reaction force, or those that are likely to be imposed on us—some might say that this point is more persuasive—by the defence capabilities initiative of NATO, which are higher than those of the rapid reaction force. That is why I was at some pains to suggest to the Minister that he should not be seduced by the intervention of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan.

**Mr. Richard Spring** (West Suffolk): On the right hon. and learned Gentleman's earlier point, may I briefly defend my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) in his absence? He pointed out reports that President Bush had said that Mr. Blair had assured him that the European defence effort

"would in no way undermine NATO . . . that there would be joint command"

and

"that the planning would take place within NATO".

The fact is, however, that the report that is attached to the Nice treaty says exactly the opposite.

**Mr. Campbell:** We know that things have moved on since then. As I understand it, there is now general acceptance that operational and strategic planning responsibilities must remain within NATO. It would make no sense to duplicate them. I have frequently referred in the House to NATO's right of first refusal, which is, as I understand matters, generally accepted. It is important to reflect in our discussion the fact that debate outside has moved on.

**Mr. Chidgey:** I should like to reinforce the points that my right hon. and learned Friend makes. The messages are coming loud, clear and strong from Brussels and the people who make these decisions that NATO will have first refusal and that planning, strategic and contingency elements will remain with it. That is the situation and it is agreed. Does he agree that the issue that must be addressed is the shortfall in capability in respect of NATO and the rapid reaction force, which is clear in the light of current circumstances?

**Mr. Campbell:** I do not think that anyone doubts the validity of my hon. Friend's second point. His first point—I think that he has recently returned from Brussels—corroborates my own.

**Mr. John Smith:** I entirely agree with what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said. I did not intend to seduce my right hon. Friend the Minister at all—far from it. I agree that the bottom line in this debate is military capability. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, following the events of 11 September, the likelihood of generating the political will among our NATO allies in Europe to develop such capability could be much greater?

**Mr. Campbell:** I certainly hope so. I make no bones about the fact that I lost the argument in my party to propose in the shadow Budget that the Liberal Democrats produced for the last election a real-terms increase in defence expenditure. However, the current Secretary of State for Defence lost the same argument. Indeed, so did the shadow Secretary of State for Defence. All three of us lost the argument, but the events of 11 September should now persuade others that it must be taken up. If we are serious about some of the intentions that the Prime Minister outlined in the far-ranging speech that he made at his party conference, we must be aware that they cannot be achieved with existing resources.

We are considering a framework treaty—an expression used by the Minister. Throughout the Bill's passage, we have consistently argued that the legislation should be enacted and the treaty ratified as soon as possible. Without the reforms that the treaty sets out in relation to the size and shape of the Commission, the weighting of votes in the Council of Ministers and modest extensions of qualified majority voting, it is difficult to envisage a European Union, perhaps comprising as many as 28 states, that could efficiently and effectively come to agreement.

Although it is technically true that the European Union could be enlarged without the treaty, it is difficult to envisage the timetable for that enlargement. I should not like to be the British Minister who went to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic and said, "By the way, we're not going to ratify the Nice treaty. We've got an alternative set of arrangements, including an instant IGC, which we may be able to conjure up", like a magician at a children's Christmas party. I should not like to try to answer the subsequent question: "When do you think we might gain admission? What is your target date in these new circumstances?"

We already have a target date, and I hope that we meet it. Such dates sometimes slip, but the advantage of a target is that it gives people something at which to aim. The notion that we could find an alternative way of dealing with the alterations that are fundamental to enlargement does not stand up to scrutiny. If we enlarge the European Union under current circumstances, every country would have two Commissioners, and a minority of the population could overrule the majority. Decision making would become sclerotic, and it would not be long before the EU became unmanageable.

There is an interesting philosophical underpinning to the debate. I am sorry that the new shadow Attorney-General is not present because he is always an adornment to such discussions. He produced a pamphlet earlier this year. It was not set—although it may have been typeset—in stone. He argued—I thought rather persuasively—that although he supported a Community, he opposed a European Union. That fault line runs through the Conservative and Unionist party. Some distinguished Conservative Members—for example, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson)—favour a Union. However, the mood in the Conservative party has moved back towards a Community.

It is difficult to envisage the current Conservative party supporting the Single European Act and consenting to its being driven through the House of Commons on a three-line Whip. It is difficult to envisage it supporting the Maastricht Bill; indeed, the current Conservative leader was diametrically opposed to it. The fault line shows a change of view. I believe that Keynes said, "When the facts change, I change my opinion." A change

of opinion has undoubtedly occurred in the Conservative party. Its members no longer accept the notion of a Union and many would be content with that of a Community. Some of us perceive that as rather contradictory when compared with positions that they held only a few years ago.

The right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) did not mention holding a referendum on the treaty, although that appeared to be Conservative party policy for a long time. A referendum should never be used simply as an act of party politics; it should be held when a genuine constitutional issue is at stake. Such issues are not at stake in the Bill. It would be different if we sought to join the single European currency. In that case, economic, political and constitutional issues remain to be determined. We should not therefore join the single currency without the endorsement of the people of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman have a view about when the country should be allowed to decide whether we want to join an integrated, federal Europe? He appears to say that the treaties of Amsterdam, Maastricht and Nice do not require a referendum. Does he agree that the combination of the three treaties would constitute a good ground for a referendum? There is currently a drip, drip, drip or ratchet syndrome that will ultimately deprive people of choice.

**Mr. Campbell:** That is an apocalyptic view. It assumes that these developments are always against our interests and always will be.

**Mr. Winterton:** They are.

**Mr. Campbell:** The hon. Gentleman may think that, but the vast majority of the people of the United Kingdom are not similarly minded.

**Mr. Winterton:** They have not had a chance to be.

**Mr. Campbell:** The hon. Gentleman is making sedentary remarks. If he wants to intervene again, I will certainly allow him to do so.

**Mr. Winterton:** I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Will he tell me, and the House, when the people have had a real chance to talk about the federal Europe into which we are steadily marching, day by day? The only issue on which the right hon. and learned Gentleman says we should have a referendum is the single currency. Is there not more to a federal Europe than a single currency?

**Mr. Campbell:** There is more to a federal Europe, as the hon. Gentleman defines it, than a single currency. If, for example, it was proposed that the decision to deploy British forces should be made in Brussels rather than here in the Chamber, that would certainly be an issue of fundamental constitutional importance that should be put to the British people.

When we had our debates about chinks of light, blank cheques and all the rest of it, I was at some pains to point out that the decision about the deployment of British troops should rest here, because it was our responsibility to answer to our constituents if we wanted to send their sons and daughters into situations in which they might lose their lives. I do not support that; but that is the kind of issue that I would regard as being of sufficiently fundamental constitutional importance to require a referendum.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman would like to point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) that the case he put was argued extensively during the last general election, with not particularly desirable effects from the point of view of our party.

**Mr. Campbell:** I hesitate to suggest that the hon. Gentleman might find it easier to put that point directly to his hon. Friend.

I do not believe that this is a fundamental constitutional change. The right hon. Member for Devizes referred to the, I think, 30 or 31 treaty articles. Four relate to areas in which the United Kingdom has opted out; 17 refer to portions of treaties dealing with appointments to, rules of procedure of and the human resources management of the European Parliament, its Committees and its Courts; and the other 10 extensions of qualified majority voting relate to such matters as anti-discrimination practice, priorities for structural funds and environmental measures. I do not consider those matters to be of fundamental constitutional importance.

There are occasions when qualified majority voting is actually in our interests. There are areas in which we should seek to extend it, not least the liberalisation of transport throughout the European Union. That would be entirely in our interests. We should approach each proposal on its merits, asking how it best serves our national interests. We should not approach them assuming that any extension of any kind is to be resisted because it is part of some drip, drip, drip or ratcheting up of the process.

The shadow Foreign Secretary suggested that there would be some inhibition on military action if there were a more fully formed common foreign and security policy. I have some difficulty grasping that point. I see nothing in any of the arrangements, actual or prospective, that would prevent the United Kingdom from saying, in particular circumstances, "We choose, because it is in our own interests, to ally ourselves with the United States"—or, if a more historical parallel is desired, "We choose, because it is in our own interests, to expel the Argentinians from the Falklands."

There is no inhibition in the idea of a more integrated foreign and security policy. One might argue, indeed, that if any such inhibition exists it is to be found in the NATO treaty, which, in article 5, creates an obligation to go to the assistance of any other country that is attacked on the basis that an attack on one is conceived of as an attack on another. That is a giving up—a pooling, if you like—of sovereignty. It has never affected us, and indeed there are those—in virtually all parts of the House, I believe—who would argue that it has been entirely to our advantage, not least given that the article 5 decision made just a few weeks ago by NATO demonstrated the strength of the alliance.

*[Mr. Campbell]*

It is also interesting that the queue for NATO membership, particularly by those countries that were formerly Warsaw pact members, is as long as, if not longer than, the queue of countries wanting to join the European Union.

**Ms Stuart:** Let us extend the right hon. and learned Gentleman's analogy of the NATO commitment. Although it is clear how to invoke article 5, it is not clear how long that article will remain open. The potential member states that are queueing up in much larger numbers to join NATO rather than the EU will become part of that existing obligation. As far as we can see, however, that obligation has been no deterrent.

**Mr. Campbell:** I accept that. The use of the word "deterrent", which the hon. Lady has introduced to the debate, points to the fact that NATO is an alliance that is based on nuclear weapons. New members are therefore signing up not only to an article 5 obligation but to an alliance that still as a fundamental part of its policy and doctrine has a reliance on nuclear weapons. If there were anxieties, one would expect them to be produced not only in relation to the responsibility to go to the aid of all other members, but in relation to the issue of the nuclear deterrent.

I think that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) said words to the effect that this treaty is not the end. I hope that we shall shortly have from the Government a White Paper setting out their views on precisely what will happen and what position they will take at the 2004 intergovernmental conference. A White Paper on the future of Europe has been over-long delayed, and I think that we are entitled to expect the Government to produce a coherent vision for that.

Other Liberal Democrat Members and I believe that it is right to argue for a proper constitutional basis for the European Union, to establish clearly and unequivocally the nature of the powers and responsibilities of the European Union itself and of constituent Governments, and to establish the rights of individual citizens. I believe that setting out those points in the proper constitutional framework would go a very long way towards making the people of Europe understand more clearly the nature of the European Union.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that one of the desirable features, as a Government objective, of such a White Paper and eventually also of such a treaty would be to drop the phrase "ever closer union", which is in the preface to the Rome treaty and certainly produces damaging reactions of the type expressed by the hon. Member for Macclesfield?

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** I had hoped that I was an hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Campbell:** I think that one or both hon. Gentlemen are about to invoke an article 5 declaration.

**Mr. Jackson:** My hon. Friend may not have noticed that I was trying to hold out to him an olive branch.

**Mr. Winterton:** It was very well hidden.

**Mr. Campbell:** I have not often felt superfluous in the Chamber, but I am at risk of feeling so on this occasion. Perhaps it is time that Conservative Members established a working party on the future of Europe.

As the hon. Member for Wantage said, the disadvantage of the phrase "ever closer union" is its ambiguity. It means what anyone wants it to mean. That is why it is all the more necessary to have a constitutional framework for the European Union. If one wants, for example, to find where particular provisions lie, one has to consult a whole series of treaties. Measures may have been altered in some way, but that is never clear immediately on first reading. Some type of codification, as well as a careful delineation of the rights and responsibilities of the various levels of the European Union itself and of the Commission and the Council of Ministers, and delineation of the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens, would seem to offer a way forward out of the anxiety, which I do not believe is well founded, that we are engaged in a process of ratcheting up or of drip, drip, drip.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Chidgey:** Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

**Mr. Campbell:** No. I should like, if I may, to make some progress.

The Government have been defective in one respect—the European single currency. I have no doubt that if that argument is to be won—it is in Britain's interests to be part of that currency, subject to the economic conditions at the time of joining being propitious—it cannot be left until the point at which the Chancellor of the Exchequer produces his tablets of stone and makes a statement to the effect that the five economic conditions, which are essentially political in character, have been met. The wind blows in various directions. For example, the Minister emerges as an apparent enthusiast for the single currency, but then someone in a different Department draws back. The country is entitled to look to the Government for a coherent and consistent view on the single currency, and if the Government wish their view to triumph they must accept that the argument must be made now.

**Mr. Spring:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman called—correctly, in my view—for a White Paper leading up to the intergovernmental conference. In view of the extraordinary movement in statements from the Government on the single currency, does he agree that it would be appropriate to have a White Paper that set out all the considerations—economic, political and constitutional—on the single currency? I hope that he would support that.

**Mr. Campbell:** I certainly would support that proposal. One can hardly argue, as I have, that this is a matter of economic, political and constitutional importance without accepting the need for a proper statement of the Government's position, and the best way to enshrine that is in the form of a White Paper. The debate on the single currency should start, and as soon as possible.

I said that I thought there had been a change of mood in the Conservative party, for the reasons I mentioned and which I will not repeat. However, those of us who are

advocates and supporters of Europe should be much more active in putting our case. Far too much of what the public learn of Europe is contained in curious stories in tabloid newspapers, most of which are founded on myth, not fact or reality.

I have no doubt that the United Kingdom has benefited considerably from our membership of the European Union and that our future best lies in a close relationship with it. That is why the Bill should have a swift passage through the House and the treaty should receive swift ratification. We should not exclude those who for such a long time lived under the shadow of communism from the benefits and advantages that we have enjoyed so long ourselves.

5.22 pm

**Joyce Quin** (Gateshead, East and Washington, West): I do not wish to pre-empt the result of the vote tonight, but I welcome the fact that we are likely to conclude our part in the ratification of the Nice treaty today. I have listened to the debates on Second Reading and in Committee and they have been much enriched by the contributions of several new hon. Members, who have brought much to our debates from their experiences of various organisations and previous employment. They have made some very constructive comments.

Many pertinent questions have been put in the course of our deliberations. While I am light years away from the official Opposition's European policy, it is none the less right to pose hard questions from all points of view about how we best engage our population with the European issues that we have discussed. The hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) is right to say that there was no excited tide of anti-Europeanism that was somehow vindicated in the recent general election result. However, there was an alarming passivity and lack of engagement with the issues, and I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) that it is important for the Government—and all of us in our constituencies—to address the issues and air them widely.

**Dr. Nick Palmer** (Broxtowe): Does my right hon. Friend agree that part of the problem is that many hon. Members, on both sides of the argument, are committed in principle either to more or less union, whereas men and women on the street are more interested in what the European Union is going to do? They are less interested in the more arcane constitutional arguments on which we spend so much time.

**Joyce Quin:** My hon. Friend makes a valid point. People respond more warmly to the European Union when they think that it is dealing with issues that are important. We all remember the sea change in the attitude to the European Union that took place among many trade unionists. That happened not because they suddenly got excited about enhanced co-operation or treaty provisions, but because they felt that the EU was talking about employment rights and conditions—matters very dear to their hearts. Similarly, when the EU was associated with a campaign to clean up beaches, many coastal communities took a great deal of interest. It is therefore important for the EU—and the House—to deal with the sort of practical tasks that co-operation among EU countries can address.

In many ways, it is ironic that European co-operation at the present time seems more important than ever. We need to use some of the existing European structures effectively. I was very glad to hear my right hon. Friend the Minister speak of the co-operation that is taking place to combat terrorism. Information is being shared between intelligence agencies, and practical ways to combat terrorism are being studied. For example, action is being taken to strengthen aviation security, and work is being done at a European level to deal with funds and bank accounts that might be used to help terrorists.

Those are extremely important matters, but addressing them is made easier by the fact that appropriate structures already exist in the EU that we can tap into. We do not have to take time to create many new structures before we can react to what happened on 11 September. We are therefore able to use structures such as Europol or the justice and home affairs provisions, and we have already done so. It helps a great deal that justice and home affairs Ministers are so used to holding regular meetings. They are able to contact each other quickly to work out how to move forward. The existence of the EU is therefore of great benefit in that regard.

The official Opposition's approach is to renegotiate or dismantle the EU. I am worried about that, as it will harm co-operation in many vital areas. When I was a Home Office Minister, I visited the British arm of Europol and was impressed by the way in which exchange of information had already led to the arrests of some serious transnational criminals. Such work is not often advertised, as to do so would alert the criminals to what is being done, but it is none the less important. I therefore hope that we can build on the efforts being made in that regard, rather than dismantle them.

I listened to the new shadow Foreign Secretary, and found his arguments extremely unconvincing. It is very hard to say that one is firmly in favour of enlargement, and then vote against measures designed precisely to facilitate enlargement. It is important to remember what happened in the Irish referendum and to look at ways of dealing with the issues that arose from it, but that does not mean that the whole process should be stopped as a result. As the hon. Member for Wantage pointed out so effectively, that is an absurd line to take.

I noted that, in a radio interview yesterday, the shadow Health Secretary, the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), was trying to convince us that the European issue had been settled among members of the official Opposition, even though Lord Skidelsky had announced that he was leaving the Conservative party largely because of the European issue. Had the shadow Health Secretary been here for today's debate, he would have seen the wildly different reactions that the European issue has caused on his own Benches.

On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary advised the Opposition to learn from Labour's experience during the long years of opposition, but there are some differences. Our own slough of despond in the early 1980s was caused by an internal problem. What is causing such dissension in the Opposition's ranks is an external factor—the European Union—and its evolving nature. Unless the Conservative party can tackle the issue sensibly, it is in for a traumatic experience for a long time to come.

**Denzil Davies:** I do not know when my right hon. Friend came to this House, but she will remember—or,

*[Denzil Davies]*

if not, she will be able to read about it in *Hansard*—that the Single European Act was constantly opposed by the then Opposition from both the Front and Back Benches.

**Joyce Quin:** I know the history of this issue very well. No one can deny that there have been considerable changes in my party's attitude towards Europe during that time. None the less, over a period of many years, the European issue has been decided in our party with large majorities. Most party members whom I come across are very comfortable with the Government's approach to the issue.

On Second Reading, I urged the Government to go out into the country and sell enlargement to the various regions and communities. I still believe that that is extremely important, once our deliberations on the Bill have been concluded.

We can give the population of our country many positive reasons for enlargement. Obviously, we favour it because it completes the historic task of reconciliation after the end of the cold war. We also need to point out that enlargement has already promoted positive change in the applicant countries. It has helped to improve the treatment of minorities in those countries, resolve some border and nationality disputes and, very importantly, to underpin democracy. That is a huge advantage, and we should not undersell it.

**Mr. Spring:** I agreed with the right hon. Lady when she said on Second Reading that the Government should sell enlargement. I wonder whether she believes that that has happened. It is certainly not clear to me. Can she say why, increasingly, right across the European Union, not only in the United Kingdom, there is, regrettably, more opposition to the European Union and to enlargement, even in the accession states?

**Joyce Quin:** I do not see the problem in the same terms as the hon. Gentleman. I see a problem, which I mentioned earlier, of a lack of engagement in the issue and a somewhat passive approach. However, my postbag is not full of letters opposing European Union enlargement. When I have held meetings on the subject in my area, people's attitudes have, on the whole, been positive.

The economic advantages of enlargement, which benefit the existing members of the European Union as much as the applicant countries, should weigh effectively with many of our constituents. They are concerned not so much about the theories of European integration as about the likely prospects for jobs, employment, the environment and other practical issues.

There is no doubt that increased investment has already taken placé in the applicant countries because of the prospect of enlargement. Investors know that those countries will be part of the European market in the future. The increased volumes of trade between us and the applicant countries is a welcome phenomenon. Those trade bonds have benefited us easily as much as they have benefited the new countries. Many industries in our towns, cities and constituencies are already benefiting from trade with the new countries. Those are all important points to make.

Indeed, on Second Reading, if I remember rightly, the Minister pointed out some of the expected gains in terms of growth in gross domestic product in both existing European Union member countries and the new countries as a result of this process.

I am also glad that considerable regional and structural support is already being given to the new countries—again, on the basis that enlargement is going to take place. I urge that that expenditure be speeded up in some areas. It is particularly important for rural development. The so-called SAPARD—special accession programme for agriculture and rural development—schemes have been slow to get off the ground in applicant countries, but could make a real difference and help to progress rural development in those countries.

The schemes could also help the cause of common agricultural policy reform. As many hon. Members have pointed out, that reform is of prime importance. I certainly do not want CAP issues to scupper enlargement, but the imperative for reform is very real and necessary. I want this country to lead in the negotiations for reform, as I believe we are doing, and to lead by example by using existing funds to the maximum extent for rural development rather than the traditional price and product support mechanisms, which have caused the CAP to overshoot its budgets, created so many difficulties and distorted agriculture in EU countries for a good many years.

There are positive messages that we can convey as a result of the ratification of the treaty of Nice and its coming into force. The Government achieved a very good deal for Britain during the Nice negotiations and I congratulate them on the way in which they have defended and promoted our interests. What was achieved will help to secure successful enlargement of the EU as a whole.

5.37 pm

**Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory** (Wells): I come new to this legislation, but not new to the subject. In the years when I was involved with European matters, and lately when I have been not so involved, I have noticed the persistent habit of Governments of justifying controversial measures by an appeal to relatively uncontroversial overall aims. Just as the single market and the pursuit of free trade have been used to justify all sorts of harmonising and regulatory measures, so enlargement, which all right-thinking people are supposed to favour, is now being used to justify all sorts of disagreeable measures, including a good many in the treaty and the Bill.

When the Minister was pressed on that matter he asserted that the Bill was necessary for enlargement. He then retreated somewhat and said that it was simply necessary for ratification. I am not sure that that is technically correct. Ratification of treaties is a Crown prerogative and I think that it is technically true that the Government could proceed with ratification in the absence of legislation. In practical terms, however, it is obviously necessary for them to get the Bill through the House if they are to ratify.

Whether the treaty is required for enlargement is nevertheless a different question. Before the end of this debate we need a certain and clear answer to that question from the Minister. I believe that what is being suggested

is highly misleading and untrue. It is certainly the case that the Nice treaty contains some institutional changes that are required for eventual enlargement of the EU, but those are written in protocols and could easily be removed from present legislation and eventually incorporated in the necessary accession treaties. I have some acquaintance with that subject because I was the junior Minister who negotiated the last round of enlargement, when Finland, Norway, Sweden and Austria were negotiating to join the European Union, and at that time the institutional changes—the majority voting, the weighting of votes in the Council and the number of seats in the European Parliament—appeared not in a treaty such as has come out of Nice, but in the accession treaty. However, if it was desirable, in advance of the detailed negotiations, for the European Union to declare exactly how many votes were to be distributed in the succession of enlargement waves, that could be done by a political declaration at this stage.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a difference between this enlargement and that enlargement? In this enlargement, there will have to be a reallocation of seats among the existing member states. In that enlargement, there was not.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Yes, but I do not believe that that alters the point I am making. It is simply not necessary, legally or politically, for those changes to be incorporated in an Act of Parliament at this stage. It could quite easily be done at the accession treaty stage, as was done before. However, if my hon. Friend wishes it all to be set out now in a document and agreed, that could be done by political agreement. The European Union is very good at finding ways to express itself politically to give certainty to future negotiations.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Rochford and Southend, East): On this difficult and important issue, will my right hon. Friend look to the good advice of a Mr. Prodi, who used to say, until quite recently, that the treaty was vital for the extension of the European Union, but after the Irish referendum said that the extension of Europe did not require the treaty of Nice at all?

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right; Mr. Prodi made a series of mistakes. He started by trying to ignore the rejection of Nice by the Irish—a breathtaking degree of arrogance on the part of a European institution—but he then retreated somewhat and conceded, under pressure, that the Nice treaty was not required or necessary for enlargement. That is the case that I am now making.

**Mr. Bryant:** As far as I understand the argument about Ireland's already having decided on behalf of the whole of Europe, perhaps those who argue that case would do better to advocate the idea that each time there is a treaty to be ratified, one country—to be chosen by rotation—should decide on behalf of the whole of Europe whether it should be ratified, because that is exactly the position that the official Opposition are now advocating.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I have given way to some pretty silly interventions in my time in the House, but that one takes the record. Is the hon. Gentleman now saying that he does not believe in the unanimity rule for treaty changes? Even the most enthusiastic pro-European, on the Treasury Bench or any other, could not seriously advance the proposition that we could simply ignore the treaty of Rome as amended, and ignore what the Irish have decided, not for the whole of Europe but for themselves. Under the present law it is a requirement that treaty changes be agreed by all member states. If the hon. Gentleman wants to find a way around that, I suggest that he take it up with the Irish and use his supposed persuasive powers to get them to change their minds in due course; but that certainly will not be done by bullying the Irish or threatening to ignore their decision or the underlying treaty requirement.

I have now reached my main argument. If the European Union were seriously preparing itself for enlargement—if it really was interested in making Europe fit to take on up to 12 new member states—why has CAP reform not taken place? It is simply irresponsible to proceed with enlargement when everyone knows that, under the present CAP, Poland's entry to the EU alone will bankrupt the budget. So it is one of this country's duties to ask these difficult questions in advance. To negotiate all sorts of wonderful institutional changes that involve weighted votes without dealing with the underlying problems of the CAP and the budget is to put things the wrong way around—and I shall say a word or two about the budget.

**Mr. David:** Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that a significant financial reform of the CAP took place in 1999? According to the agreed rota, there will be a further fundamental discussion of the CAP's future in which its new financial perspective will be discussed.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** No, the earlier reforms may have gone some way to meeting the problem for existing member states, but they do not begin to measure up to the challenge of enlargement. The French have now made it perfectly clear that they have no interest in reopening the reform package before 2006. So Europe is simply not ready for enlargement in the crucial issues of agriculture and the budget.

We shall debate such matters at greater length tomorrow, but it is important to refer to the budget now, because everyone will concede that the present arrangements for contributions to and receipts from the EU budget are hopelessly arbitrary, unsatisfactory and unfair. The payment side of the budget is riddled with errors, misappropriation and fraud.

There is something almost comic in the fact that Europe lectures the candidate states that seek entry about budgetary discipline and that they will be required to put their own finances in order, given that the EU budget is riddled with fraud. That is not just my opinion; the European Court of Auditors has refused to verify the accounts as legal or regular for the sixth year running.

I am a chartered account, and if I had encountered such problems six years in a row in my professional life, I certainly would not invest in the company involved, and its directors would all face prosecution. The problems are like those faced by Railtrack, but they are worse because they happen every year, and the Government do nothing about them. We in the House can do nothing about them because large sums are sent to Europe, and some of them are returned, without any parliamentary authority from year to year.

*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]*

I remind the House that, on average during the past six years, this country's gross contributions have been nearly £20 million every day. Enlargement will add to that problem, because we will bring into the EU states with even weaker administrative and financial systems. If we were serious about preparing Europe for enlargement, and doing so responsibly, such issues should have been discussed and agreed at Nice, rather than simply tinkering with the voting weights for each prospective member state.

The fact is that the Bill is not primarily about enlargement; it is actually another milestone on the way to a more integrated EU. European integration is not proceeding as quickly as some people would wish. Indeed, many people in the Commission and elsewhere are disappointed at the speed of progress. However, on qualified majority voting, we are still going down that road quite quickly. The Bill contains new proposals for QMV in 31 new articles, some of which are very important.

Industrial policy has not been described so far in the debate. It worries me, however, that we are signing up to a majority voting system for an industrial policy that will reinforce all the failings of the European Union economic model. It will do that by giving other member states opportunities for interference and meddling on a industrial scale by using the EU budget.

The Prime Minister goes to the United States on many occasions, and in less troubled times he would go there to learn. He has described to the House how he believes that the European model has much to learn from the United States about job creation, innovation, enterprise and economic growth. He has tried to sell such ideas to his European Union colleagues in the Council of Ministers. Therefore, after the Lisbon summit, he said that he had seen

"a sea change in European economic thinking"—[*Official Report*, 27 March 2000; Vol. 347, c. 21.].

It was nothing of the sort; that summit was an exercise in self-delusion.

The European Union persists in using qualified majority voting as a way of forcing through damaging and unnecessary measures against the interests of this country. I am not making a partisan point, so let me give an example of where this Government opposed such a measure. The information and consultation directive will impose on member states national works councils. It will have nothing to do with multinational companies or companies that trade and operate in more than one member state; it will cover companies that are based, trade and operate entirely in this country.

The Government rightly said that the proposal was a breach of the subsidiarity principle and argued as such, but they lost the argument. More importantly, they lost the vote. They therefore had to make the best of a bad job. An unnecessary, expensive, interfering and meddling European measure will be imposed on this country against the wishes of all parties, this House, the other place and the British Government.

I cite another example, and it is one that I feel particularly strongly about. The art levy directive has been debated in the past, but the House may not know that the directive has now been passed against the vote of the British Government. It will impose a levy on the resale of all works of art by living artists or by artists who have been dead for less than 70 years. The practical effect of that will simply be that any valuable work of art will no longer be sold in the European Union. Sales will take place in New York, Japan or any art centre outside the EU.

The directive will therefore destroy the London art market, which is the largest in the world and by far the largest in the EU. The Government understood that and, to be fair to them, they argued the case well and persistently, but they were finally outvoted. Art dealers in the United States cannot believe what has happened. A European directive will enrich not the London, United Kingdom and EU art markets but one on the other side of the Atlantic. They cannot believe how that can happen. I have no way of describing the matter to them other than in the terms that I just have.

The directive was passed under existing qualified majority voting, but the Bill will extend such voting into new areas. What I have described will happen in areas that we have not yet thought of. That is not just bad for the economy. This country will catch the EU disease of over-regulation and over-government; more seriously, such a proposal is bad for democracy.

**Angus Robertson** (Moray): How does the right hon. Gentleman square that argument with the view of politicians on the continent who are much in favour of a federal Europe? In their reaction to that part of the Nice agreement that deals with the qualified majority threshold and the number of votes for a blocking minority, they viewed the treaty as one of the greatest brakes on a federal Europe. In fact, we are in a confederal Europe.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** As I said earlier, some people would like to go further and faster. The hon. Gentleman did not dispute the example that I gave, and it is inescapably the case that qualified majority voting—which has done acknowledged damage to the House and to the country in the way that I have described—will be extended into new areas. That is my point.

Such an approach is bad for democracy and the public have sensed that. The point has already been made that they do not worry all the time about the minutiae of EU decision making. They do not understand it for a start, but they perceive that something is wrong. It is striking that, when the electors in any member state are allowed near a decision about a specific European matter, they come up with unpredictable results.

A year ago, the Danes surprised everyone by voting against the proposal that they should join the euro. They did that by overcoming the Danish establishment—almost all the political parties, the trade unions, employer organisations and most of the press—and all their European neighbours. The people smelled a rat and voted no. In March this year, the Swiss—not a member state, but a highly democratic country—voted no to the proposition that their politicians should apply for membership of the EU, and in June, the Irish unexpectedly voted no to the treaty of Nice.

There are other manifestations of that malaise. One is the shamefully low turnout in elections to the European Parliament. That problem will not be solved by giving the

EU more powers. People will not rush out and vote in European elections because of a great advance in co-decision making. Nor will it help that, under the Bill and the Nice treaty, the EU will be given powers to regulate and fund political parties on a pan-European basis. It will simply increase public cynicism about the whole enterprise when politicians dole out money to other politicians and their own political parties. That is also combined with the strong suspicion that political parties that do not sign up to, or endorse, the aims of the EU will not receive the money. There is a deep-seated malaise that the treaty does not begin to address.

The distribution of power within the United Kingdom also needs addressing. We need to find ways of shifting power downwards; I would like to revive local authorities and, in this Parliament, I hope to persuade my colleagues to re-examine the issue of local government finance. I know that other Members share that aim. However, if one has that aspiration, it is crazy to start to transfer more powers upwards to the most remote Government in the world—the EU. That will happen under the treaty by the extension of the competence and power of the EU, reinforced by the extension of qualified majority voting into new areas. That represents a transfer of decision making from people who have been voted for and can be removed—Members of the House, for example—to people who are unelected and cannot be removed. The process is irreversible and irrevocable.

It is sometimes claimed that all the little glitches and problems and things that we do not like are worth while because we gain so much influence. Why is it necessary to try to achieve some small influence over decisions in other countries by giving up all influence over decisions in our country? Is that not the negation of democracy and of the reasons why we have been sent here? In the current international crisis, can people seriously argue that our influence in the world or on the United States or middle east is diminished in any way by our opposition to some aspects of European integration, or that it would be extended if we signed up to a further ratchet of European integration?

I believe that the reverse is true. The seeds of the destruction of our influence are in the Nice treaty. The proposals for a separate European Union military structure outside NATO, which is what we are signing up to, will undermine what influence we have in the wider world.

**Mr. John Smith:** Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the decision taken at last year's 46th plenary session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Berlin? It voted unanimously to support the creation of a European rapid reaction force and a European security and defence policy precisely because it would enhance NATO capability.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I disagree. The Bill will not add one soldier or one pound coin to the European Union's defence budgets or capability. There are profound misgivings about what is happening, which I share, throughout the American Administration.

We must consider the intentions and motivations behind the changes in the treaty. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman balance his rather rosy view of what he hopes will happen with what the French Government have in mind for the powers and structural changes that will occur after the Nice treaty is implemented.

I am convinced that the European Union is equipping itself with the attributes and powers of a state. That is the essence of the treaty changes. However, most people whom we represent do not want that. If we continue down that path, it will lead at best to apathy and disillusionment, which we are already witnessing, and at worst to alienation, resentment and perhaps an eventual reassertion of self-government in unpredictable circumstances. The House would therefore be doing its democratic duty if it rejected the Bill.

6.3 pm

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Listening to the debate, it seems that some hon. Members are developing a mentality of "Stop the world—I want to get off." They do not recognise that the world has changed. I make no bones about the fact that in the early 1970s I took part in the campaign to keep Britain out of the European Common Market, as it was at the time. I also make no bones about my position on our defence policy before the rapid changes of the 1980s. The world has changed, and serious political parties also need to change and recognise what is happening.

I listened carefully to the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell). I agreed with everything that he said, except for one thing—he did not recognise that there has recently been a discernible change among the tabloid newspapers. Although it is not my usual bedtime reading, I commend to hon. Members the *News of the World* of 14 October this year, which ran an article about the euro under the headline, "It's easy money". It did not go the whole hog and say that the euro is a good thing—far from it. In the context of British holidaymakers going to European destinations, it said:

"The bad news is, you're going to have to get used to the euro no matter what happens in Britain."

However, it went on to set out six good reasons why there are benefits if Europe uses the euro—so even tabloid newspapers recognise that the world is changing.

We learned a little this evening about the parentage of the grandmother of the right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) and discovered that the right hon. and learned Member for North–East Fife also has a European grandmother. Although one was from Italy and one from Glasgow, they are nevertheless Europeans. Indeed, they might soon find out that they are related.

The debate is wide ranging and hon. Members have given interesting perspectives on the realities of European affairs. However, on a more serious note, one or two hon. Members referred to events on 11 September. I want to illustrate why the EU should consider the Nice treaty in the light of some benefits that could accrue from actions that have been taken by our European partners with other allies.

We have opened the door to enlargement and a bigger single market. That will bring Britain huge benefits, including greater security, more prosperity and more jobs. There are important lessons to learn from terrorist attacks. My right hon. Friend the Minister referred to the special European Council meeting on 21 September, at which European leaders agreed new measures, including many UK ideas aimed at combating terrorism. However, he did not mention changes to increase aviation security within Europe. If we consider what happened on 11 September and the distances that some of the planes travelled, it is

*[Mr. Andrew Miller]*

clear that there needs to be a common policy, plan and rapid reaction to respond to such an incident if it again occurs in European airspace.

I know that that is a difficult idea to contemplate, but I put it to hon. Members in all seriousness. There has been lengthy speculation about what leaders of free nations would have to do if they faced such an attack. European countries are so small that the distances travelled in north America are the equivalent of crossing the airspace of several European nations. If that does not justify increased defence co-operation, I do not know what does.

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** The hon. Gentleman is making a typically fair-minded and thoughtful speech. However, in the event of a terrible decision having to be taken to shoot down an airliner, which I think is what he is getting at, surely that could be taken only through the medium of NATO. Such a decision would be taken at that level if it is not taken unilaterally. I cannot envisage a European military capability making a difference in the way that he suggests.

**Mr. Miller:** I hear what the hon. Gentleman says and if such an awful event did occur, I would expect the decision to act to be taken at the highest level in this country and in the country where the airspace was crossed. However, we are talking about seconds and minutes of travelling time between countries. It takes just a few minutes to travel across Luxembourg, Belgium and a bit of France to get here. There are clear benefits in having close co-operation on such matters.

European Transport Ministers have made progress on some aviation issues, including classification of weapons, training of crew, checking and monitoring of hold luggage and protection of cockpit access. Those are important matters that demonstrate the need for a common approach to European aviation security, which hon. Members will recognise if, like me, they frequently hop from Heathrow to Brussels en route to another European destination.

**Angus Robertson:** Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman by giving a clear example of NATO's inability to fulfil the role that he suggests. Several days ago, Austria's air force was scrambled because a Turkish plane, which could not verify its course, was flying in Austrian airspace, and it was not clear whether it would continue to Germany or Italy. As the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis) is aware, Austria is not a member of NATO, so the co-operation that the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) is proposing could happen only in a European context, and not in a NATO one.

**Mr. Miller:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution. The issue needs a great deal of thought.

**Mr. John Smith:** My hon. Friend raises an interesting point about future European security and military response. However, I must point out that the Nice treaty makes no provision for that because a terrorist attack would not be classed as a Petersberg mission. In fact, there is no such facility in the NATO strategic concept, and that issue will need to be addressed.

**Mr. Miller:** I accept my hon. Friend's point and bow to his greater knowledge of NATO. I was merely speculating about the need for closer co-operation between European defence forces because of the events of 11 September.

I come now to issues in the treaty that seem to cause extraordinary objections, such as qualified majority voting. I bow to the right hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat–Amory) and his expertise in the art market. I have never found myself to be a significant player in the market, but I know what I like, as they say. I am not certain when this country signed up to the QMV to which he referred. I suspect that it was during a period of Conservative government. On the changes to QMV to which he referred, I have yet to hear an argument from any Member of this House, in any of our debates, about anything except headlines. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) listed the changes to QMV, but at no point has anyone put forward a sustainable argument to show how the changes could be damaging in a particular treaty example. Such hollow opposition from Conservative Members weakens the logic of their case.

**Mr. Spring:** We object to the extension of QMV on principle, but I shall give the hon. Gentleman an example. Article 100 deals with measures in the event of severe difficulties in the supply of certain products as well as community financial assistance to member states in severe difficulties. The hon. Gentleman may know that there is something called North sea oil. We do not know, because we do not have an interpretation of the Bill, what would happen if there were difficulties in supplying energy. Could the European Union have access to North sea oil on the basis of QMV? What has happened with fisheries should clearly demonstrate the need for nations to protect their assets, and that is simply one of many examples from the Nice treaty that are not ultimately in our national interest.

**Mr. Miller:** The hon. Gentleman is simply taking article 100 and speculating on "what happens if", with no solid evidence that what he says is the case. I have heard no sustainable argument linking the issues of long-term energy policy to article 100. I understand the hon. Gentleman's fear, which may be worth exploring, but it is not being explored in a rational way in this debate.

If the hon. Gentleman expects the British public to swing towards his side of the argument, I suggest that he consider article 137(1)(k), for example, which might be included in the list of principal objections. I understand that there might be an ideological difference between our two parties about modernisation of social protection systems, provisions relating to health and safety at work, and so on. Some of the more esoteric examples that are being given, however, do not wash with me and certainly do not wash with the British public, as we discovered in the recent general election.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the example that I gave him, in which the information and consultation directive, which was opposed by the Government—presumably with the hon.

Gentleman's support—went through by qualified majority voting as agreed at Amsterdam? That is a clear example of the Government giving way on majority voting. A measure came before the House, the Government opposed it—presumably with the support of the hon. Gentleman—but the measure was enacted over their heads. Is that not a clear example of the democratic wish of the House being overridden by a directive?

**Mr. Miller:** The right hon. Gentleman is trying to get me into deep trouble. As some of my hon. Friends may know, I encouraged the Government to go a little further on the issue to which he refers. I will not be drawn too far on that, as I might find myself in hot water.

The Tory objection to the rapid reaction force does not fit with reality, either. As my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) eloquently said, since flesh was put on the bones of the project, opinion in NATO and other serious military circles has been in favour.

As for the common agricultural policy, everyone recognises the case for massive change. However, the logic of the argument on the CAP must have been just as correct when the previous Conservative Government signed the Maastricht treaty. Opposition Members seem to be crying wolf by introducing the issue at this point.

**Mrs. Browning:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Miller:** The hon. Lady was around at the time—just—so I will give way.

**Mrs. Browning:** The hon. Gentleman may have been in the Chamber when the Minister for Europe, in an intervention, suggested that the Government had discussed with Ministers the preparation for changes to the CAP and expanding the Community, whereas the previous Conservative Government had not. I assure him that in 1995-96, as an Agriculture Minister, I discussed reform of the CAP in both Hungary and Poland, for example. The Conservative Government created a working party that produced a document for reform of the CAP.

What on earth have the hon. Gentleman and his ministerial colleagues been doing for the past five years? They fudged the situation because it was difficult. They kicked it into the long grass, which is why we are in this mess.

**Mr. Miller:** I accept that it is a difficult issue, but I do not accept that it has been fudged. From the discussions that I have had recently with colleagues from other countries, and from what my right hon. Friend the Minister for Europe said at the start of the debate, I believe that significant progress is being made. However, I do not understand why this one treaty is suddenly supposed to be bound up inextricably with reforms to the CAP. Those reforms have been necessary for a long time, and I accept the hon. Lady's point that progress is needed.

The treaty was subject to a great deal of discussion on the fringes of a conference that I was privileged to attend in September. I was in the Estonian Parliament, with colleagues who included the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Luff), when the terrible events of 11 September unfolded. During the proceedings on the fringe, I discussed those issues with a wide range of colleagues, including, Mr. Deputy Speaker, your opposite number in the Hungarian Parliament and others from Parliaments in existing and prospective EU member states.

It became clear to me that existing member nations and applicant countries want to make progress and that they feel a degree of frustration with the conduct of the British Conservative party and the handful of others who adopt a negative approach to the process of enlargement. They all say that they want enlargement, but they do not offer a practical alternative approach, only the piecemeal, one-after-the-other process that would take for ever and would be an impossible way in which to increase EU membership to 27 or 28 nations.

It is right that Britain should commit itself to the treaty of Nice. In the coming years, we should work closely with our European partners and prospective partners to develop the interests of both our nation and our neighbours and to enhance the role of Europe, thereby enhancing Britain's position in the world.

6.21 pm

**Mrs. Angela Browning** (Tiverton and Honiton): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Third Reading debate as I was otherwise occupied during the Bill's previous stages and so unable to participate. I hope to put on record my concerns, which are shared by several of my right hon. and hon. Friends who have already spoken.

During the opening speech on Second Reading, the Foreign Secretary prayed in aid the same argument that we heard expressed tonight by the Minister for Europe: that the Bill is purely about enlargement. That is not so. Enlargement is an important aspect of the Bill, but it constitutes only 5 per cent. of that which appears on the face of the Bill. If we as the House of Commons are to do justice to any Bill laid before us, it is important that we analyse it, scrutinise it and consider the consequences of all of it, so we must examine that other 95 per cent. of the Bill. It is simply not acceptable for the Government to create a smokescreen by telling people that the Conservative party opposes enlargement of the European Union and that any criticism we might make of the Bill reveals that we are anti-enlargement. That is a travesty of the truth, given the small portion of the Bill that deals with enlargement.

On Second Reading on 4 July, the Foreign Secretary said that he wanted to put the Bill in the proper historical context, but he rested his argument solely on the enlargement aspects of the Bill. Since then, we have witnessed the dramatic outcome of the referendum in the Republic of Ireland. It has been implied during today's debate, especially by the Minister for Europe, that if the House does not approve the Bill tonight, of all the member countries of the European Union ours will be the one that is pilloried for failing to do its duty.

Let us look at the progress achieved by other countries in ratification of the Nice treaty. Belgium, which one might imagine would be enthusiastic, has not yet initiated a discussion; Germany has had only a First Reading; and the Greek Parliament has not yet initiated any debate on ratification. The list goes on: Italy has not yet ratified; the position in Ireland is now a matter of record; Austria has had only a First Reading; other countries including

*[Mrs. Angela Browning]*

Portugal and Finland have presented a Bill, but only in draft form; and Sweden has not yet initiated the debate. Yet here, the Minister for Europe—desperately hiding under the cloak of EU expansion—tells us that we have not got time to talk about 95 per cent. of the Bill, but if we simply sign up we will have done our duty. I do not accept that argument.

Let us consider why the Irish rejected the proposal. One of the reasons, although by no means the only one, was their concern about the EU's inability to address the vexed issue of reform of the common agricultural policy—a matter that has been mentioned tonight. Progress on CAP reform has to have been made before all the new countries enter the EU. People have argued that other countries have entered in the past, and that is true, but I recall that Spain and Portugal did not have an especially easy passage: there were problems, especially in the fisheries and agriculture sector. The economies of many of the countries that are lined up waiting to join the EU are highly dependent on agriculture and horticulture.

We should take a look at the Irish experience. Mr. John O'Dowd, who was deeply involved as a member of the committee of the National Platform for Ireland, writes:

"Right at the beginning of the Irish campaign our first important step was to get hold of a reliable English language text of the Treaty. As everyone knows, Nice was conceived in darkness and confusion, so it was hardly surprising that a reliable text was difficult to find. However, once we got that the long and slow process of working out what Nice did began. As with every other EU treaty, Nice was a mixed bag. It was important to understand what the issues were, how they were prioritised in the treaty, and what was at the heart of Nice. This was a long haul, but for us it was vital to be able to get a grip on what we were dealing with.

Once that was done (virtually a month of solid work) we could then proceed to organise the information we had."

I shall come shortly to those parts of the treaty that cause me concern, but the other 95 per cent. deserves proper scrutiny.

It is a matter of great regret that during the Committee stage, despite some excellent and constructive contributions by Conservative Members and the tabling of amendments and new clauses, the Government failed to consider properly or agree to a single proposal advanced by my right hon. and hon. Friends. The theme struck by the Foreign Secretary at the start of the debate on the Nice treaty was carried through, and we see it being finalised tonight. We are being told, "Either agree with the Bill, or you are against expansion of the European Union—and please don't bother us with the other 95 per cent." That is no way to treat either the House or a Bill of such importance.

As we have heard, every step of a treaty Bill causes a constitutional change. Individually, they may not be great changes, but their effect is incremental: they add up to a handing over of the powers and rights of the people who are represented by Members of Parliament to unelected people who sit in Brussels.

**Mr. Bryant:** Does the hon. Lady not accept that that is the whole point—that to a treaty the response is either yes or no? We are not here to rewrite the treaty in any way.

**Mrs. Browning:** In that case, why debate it? Why not just have a statement from a Minister to which we can all nod our heads like little donkeys and say, "Okay, you go ahead"? That does not reflect my understanding of parliamentary democracy. If things threaten to get that bad—judging by the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm, he might well encourage his colleagues to make things that bad—I will oppose it tooth and nail, as will my right hon. and hon. Friends.

**Mr. Spring:** I invite my hon. Friend to say precisely what parliamentary democracy is all about and to emphasise that the extent of the alienation and disconnection of the peoples of Europe from the institutions of the European Union is caused precisely by the attitude articulated by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Bryant).

**Mrs. Browning:** I agree. A distinguishing feature of the treaty is the big question mark resulting from the result of the Irish referendum. This evening, Members have said that treaties have been passed, even under a Conservative Government; I accept that. However, as we saw when other EU members took the single currency on board, what is distinctive is the fact that a referendum of the people by the people gave a result different from that expected by the Government.

**Dr. Ladyman** *rose—*

**Mrs. Browning:** May I finish this point before giving way?

I went to Copenhagen early in the Danish referendum campaign and shared a platform with various people from different countries, all of whom had been invited to speak by the Danes. I shared a platform with a Swedish trade unionist; I think that it was the first time in his life that he had shared a platform with a centre-right politician, and he looked a bit disconcerted. However—and this applies to every country in the EU—he said that the single currency was on the politicians' agenda and was not what the people wanted; unless the people had a voice of their own, and if they could not trust politicians to speak for them, we faced a dangerous future. I told him, "I agree with you comrade." He nearly fell off the platform.

If we, as representatives of the people, do not represent the views of the people and if, on important matters, they do not even have a referendum, then, not just in this country but throughout the European Union, we are heading for a situation that has already been remarked on by other Members tonight. Ultimately, the people will rebel and the consequences of that should not be underestimated. In democracies, people should be able to speak out. If they do not have an outlet through the people democratically elected to represent them, there is a big problem.

Several Government Members said that the recent general election gave a clear indication of what the British people think about Europe. I do not agree because a general election is not about a single issue, but about a whole range of issues. We know from every opinion poll that the British people—and it is the British people in whom I am interested—are concerned about giving up their national currency and the drip, drip effect of taking the nation further into an integrated union in which we are no longer an independent nation state. The Nice treaty

is yet another step along that route. I now give way to the hon. Member for South Thanet (Dr. Ladyman), who has been very patient.

**Dr. Ladyman:** The hon. Lady helped to lead the Conservative team that fought the last election, telling the people that it was their last chance to have their say on Europe. She was a member of that team; was she fibbing? If she is now saying that amendments to treaties passed in the House should be allowed, will she tell us how many amendments the previous Government allowed to the Maastricht treaty?

**Mrs. Browning:** At the election, the Conservative party had a clear policy, especially on the currency.

**Mr. Hugo Swire** (East Devon): And on Nice.

**Mrs. Browning:** I am grateful for that reminder. We are honouring that pledge, unlike Government Members who must wonder when they are ever going to honour anything that they promised in an election. As an MP, European issues were not the only area on which I campaigned in my Devon constituency. I held more than 40 public meetings, and we discussed the euro, European matters generally and other things. My majority trebled; in fact it more than trebled. Now that I have found out how to treble my majority, I shall do the same next time.

The treaty, of course, includes other issues. My hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) mentioned one that is of great concern. We are all conscious of the tragic events of 11 September, but I urge Members to read the debate on the Bill in July in *Hansard* and look at the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip–Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), who spelled out clearly the problems in those parts of the treaty that revise articles 1, 17 and 25 of the treaty on European Union. My hon. Friend also examined the consequences of those revisions for our defence and security policy. He mentioned terrorism, unaware of how telling his words would become. I urge Members to read his speech because we need to be sure of the terms of this country's co-operation.

I am all in favour of co-operation, but the treaty is not about flexibility and co-operation; it is about entrenching in statute things that bind us rather than give us the flexibility that we often need. In fact, flexibility, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk said in his opening remarks, is seen to be important in our defence commitment in Europe.

**Mr. John Smith:** Has the hon. Lady read article 17, which states that it shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of member states?

**Mrs. Browning:** Indeed. As has been said, we know that the Nice treaty proposes that we take the first steps to introduce what has euphemistically been called a European army and certainly a European defence and security policy. I am in favour of EU countries playing their part and contributing their fair share. I am not being malicious but making a statement of fact when I say that many members of NATO have for many years—in fact since NATO was first formed—a record of not contributing from their defence budgets the amount that they would be expected to pay. Over the years, the Americans have said quite rightly that Europe should pull its weight on defence. I do not have a problem with that general premise, but we are concerned that the treaty is proposing a break in our alignment with NATO and the Western European Union.

I listened to the Labour Members who have contributed tonight. Never mind what is in the treaty; it is part of that 95 per cent. that they do not want to talk about. The Prime Minister gave his word; things are not quite how they look in the document, and there will still be command and control liaison through NATO. In fact, that is not the interpretation of other EU states, particularly France, as I have said.

**Mr. Spring:** May I add to the point that my hon. Friend is making? It is worth considering the remarks of the Finnish commander-designate of the rapid reaction force, who said that it

"will not bow to NATO".

General Gustav Hagglund described the planned 60,000-strong force as an important symbol of EU identity, similar to the euro and the flag. He said:

"We are not talking about a subsidiary of NATO. This is an independent body."

That point is well made.

**Mrs. Browning:** It is compatible with the words of the French chief of staff whom I have quoted on the same subject. We have legitimate concerns about that aspect of the treaty and its interpretation by other EU member states, especially at this time when we all realise the significance not just of co-operation and flexibility but, as in previous times of trouble, clear structures. Ambiguity is the last thing that we want in defence and security. We do not want different nation states making different interpretations because we may discover that only when it is too late.

The other issue about which I, like my colleagues, am concerned is the extension of qualified majority voting. As a former Minister, I have been asked for examples of what it will mean. Basically, as a nation state, we will again give up some of our rights to veto matters that are in the British interest. I am particularly concerned that the so-called emergency brake, which the Government paraded after their negotiation of the Amsterdam treaty, is to be subject to qualified majority voting.

I shall briefly share with the House my experience as an Agriculture Minister. Having spent three years at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I have no doubt that, with regard to food production, there are those in the European Union who use qualified majority voting not to expand the single market and competition, but the reverse. They identify food sectors where they see British products that are causing problems to their own domestic markets, they form a cabal of like-minded countries, and they raise objections. They use their block voting power under QMV to see off a competitive sector from another country. My experience as a MAFF Minister showed that clearly.

Anyone who has ever taken an interest in the fight that we had to put up just to maintain British milk chocolate over four or five years will know that the issue is not harmonisation but the raw competition of the marketplace, where QMV is used by pressure groups and companies in

*[Mrs. Browning]*

other countries to see off the competition from the UK. We saw the same in respect of mineral waters and soya milk. We had to ban in this country the name "soya milk" on a product that was sold only in this country as soya milk, because others did not want that competition. They wanted greater input into our market, and when they could not achieve that on fair competitive terms, they did it by using QMV, forming a cabal and seeing off the competition.

No one should think that QMV enhances the single market or open competition in the EU. It is used for horse trading, and horse trading is how the whole system works.

**Mr. Hendrick:** Does the hon. Lady accept that on 42 occasions her Government gave up the veto and adopted QMV on the Single European Act and on the Maastricht treaty?

**Mrs. Browning:** I was not a Member of Parliament at the time of the Single European Act, but the hon. Gentleman is right to say that I was in Parliament for the Maastricht treaty. I will say to the House not for the first time and probably not for the last time—I have certainly said it to my constituents—that I very much regret my support for the Maastricht treaty.

**Mr. David:** The implications of the hon. Lady's remarks are profound. Everyone recognises that the great achievement of the European Union is the single market, which is virtually complete. I thought that the Opposition supported the single market. Everyone also recognises that the single market would not have come about without qualified majority voting. The hon. Lady must surely accept that simple fact.

**Mrs. Browning:** It depends what we imagined the single market would achieve, back in those early days when we first joined the common market. I voted in the 1970s that we should remain in the common market because I believe in free trade, and I could fully understand why colleagues in the party at the time of the Single European Act saw that we would bring about more free trade and remove both tariff and non-tariff barriers. I was all in favour of the principle, but in practice it did not work out that way.

For example, I had always expected that with the single market, if the Germans could make a better-quality toaster at a more competitive price than a British company, they would take our market share of toasters in the UK, and we would have to produce a better toaster. That is my rather basic understanding of the free market, but that was not the route taken by the European Community. It took the route of harmonisation in every blessed product and service, and now it is trying to integrate harmonisation into everything else that we do.

I had every hope of the single market and free trade—*[Interruption.]* I ask hon. Members not to shout from a sedentary position; I will give way.

My point is borne out by the statistics. In 1992, when the single market was created, the rate of growth in trade between the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Union was the same as that between the United States and the European Union during the same period. In other words, the US increased its trade with the EU at the same rate as we did, but the US was not subject to being a net contributor to the EU.

The 1998 figures, which are the latest that I have, show that the average of the tariffs that the EU placed on imported industrial goods was 3.6 per cent. Leaving aside any possible retaliatory measures, an average tariff of 3.6 per cent. would have yielded £3.441 billion had it been levied on the UK. In other words, if we had traded with the EU at the same rate as do the US and many other countries around the world, we would have spent £1.748 billion less of UK taxpayers' money in our contribution to the European budget.

Yes, I am a great advocate of free trade, but I am not in favour of something that parades itself as free trade or a single market, when cabals work to see off the competition and take advantage of qualified majority voting to see off sectors that are perceived as competition. I am not in favour of the United Kingdom having to give up its fishing stocks and much else in order to be net contributors to the EU, if that is not fair and does not take into account the proper rules of free trade, which is what we signed up for in the first place.

**Mr. Hendrick:** I thank the hon. Lady for giving way. She argues that the United States has benefited more from the European Union than have EU members, and she contrasts the position of the United States and the United Kingdom. Is she not aware that the fact that we share sovereignty and contribute to a common pool of funds means that we can benefit in many other ways, unlike the United States? It is not a simple trade equation. It involves programmes and projects that spread throughout the regions in the EU and benefit many regions as net gainers, such as my region in the north-west.

**Mrs. Browning:** But as a net contributor, the UK is paying for every EU-financed project that the Government agree to become involved in, as the balance sheet shows at the end of the financial year. There is no great pool of money that the EU in its largesse dollops out to regions of the UK. I know that the image of the blue flag with the circle of yellow stars is used to show that a project is EU-funded, but the hon. Gentleman must know that much of that funding is conditional upon match funding, and that the balance sheet shows that as long as we remain net contributors to the EU, we will be financing such projects ourselves.

**Mr. Hendrick:** The hon. Lady missed my point. Per capita income and per taxpayer, the north-west is a net gainer, even though as a nation we are net contributors. The hon. Lady may not agree with that method of redistribution, but the majority of hon. Members do.

**Mrs. Browning:** The hon. Gentleman may be surprised to hear me say that as it is our money anyway, I would trust his Government to decide how those funds should be distributed to the north-west, the south-west or any other region of the United Kingdom, and to be answerable to the House for their decision. I would rather they used our money for our priorities so that they would be

answerable, through Members of Parliament. We would not be the losers for it, as the money would still be spent—

**Mr. Hendrick** *rose—*

**Mrs. Browning:** I must move on. The hon. Gentleman and I will have to disagree. The money is ours. The question is who decides what it is to be spent on—people in Brussels or the United Kingdom Parliament, accountable to the people through hon. Members. I believe that accountability should mainly be here.

**Mr. David** *rose—*

**Mr. Miller** *rose—*

**Mrs. Browning:** I have taken a considerable amount of time and, much as I am enjoying the debate, I ought to summarise my other concerns about the treaty.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) spelled out his concerns about industrial policy, which I share. Every time the Government establish a deregulation taskforce, we know that it will not succeed. Once one signs up to the social chapter—lots more is going to come into it—one automatically puts a brake on Britain's competitive edge. There is no way out of that scenario and no exit strategy in respect of the social chapter now that the Government have signed up to it. Like my right hon. Friend, I am concerned about more integration in that hidden 95 per cent. of the treaty that affects our competitiveness through industrial policy.

I am also concerned about control of EU political parties, but I shall not speak in detail about it.

**Mr. Miller:** May I intervene before the hon. Lady continues?

**Mrs. Browning:** The hon. Gentleman has a very winning way, so I am happy to give way.

**Mr. Miller:** I thank the hon. Lady. Can I use the engine in her car as an example? We have spoken about it before, as it was made in my constituency.

**Mrs. Browning:** I have changed my car.

**Mr. Miller:** I hope that the engine is still made in my constituency.

**Mrs. Browning:** It is not.

**Mr. Miller:** That is terrible, but, none the less, the hon. Lady's last engine, which ran for 150,000 miles, was exported from the UK during all the troubled times that she has mentioned. It went not only to mainland Europe but to Scandinavia and the United States. We have plenty of examples of good manufacturing successes that have occurred during the period in which she is saying our competitiveness was disappearing. When we have had the products, put in the work and acted in partnership with European counterparts, we have had genuine successes.

**Mrs. Browning:** In future, whenever a Labour Member who represents a constituency in the north-east or north-west stands up to complain that he or she has just lost another 2,000 manufacturing jobs, I will be sure to repeat the hon. Gentleman's view to whichever Minister is at the Dispatch Box. That view is not usually expressed when such complaints are made.

I am concerned about the treaty proposals that will lead in future to the question of a constitution for Europe. I have heard arguments from below the Gangway about such a constitution. It seems to me that if there is a European army, constitution and single currency, as well as harmonisation in all the other spheres that have been mentioned, we will have a country called Europe. I want to see Europe as a combination of nation states that work together and co-operate. There is a great deal of advantage in co-operation. I do not want anybody to think that I do not recognise that fact or that I do not value co-operation. Once we have a country called Europe—we are going that way and are now very close to such an outcome—there will no longer be a country that one would recognise as the United Kingdom or as a democracy that is answerable to the people through this House. That is what I object to.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst):** The average length of Back-Bench speeches is now more than 20 minutes. On that basis, many of the hon. Members who are present will be disappointed. I appeal to hon. Members to give some thought to their colleagues who want to speak in the debate.

6.53 pm

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I hope to return us to the subject of the treaty of Nice, rather than to speak about our fears of possibilities that I shall not even try to find the words to describe. If we are honest, we will all probably agree that the treaty is not a perfect vehicle. It has its failings, but in negotiations where 15 member states sit around the table it is necessary to agree with some conclusions that the majority believe to be right in order to make progress. Similarly, rightly or wrongly, the treaty of Nice is the vehicle that has been chosen to take enlargement forward. That is the world as it is.

Let us consider enlargement. I gained the impression from previous speakers that half the House of Commons is in the Baltics, Poland and other accession states. From personal experience, I know that various delegations run into each other in Vilnius. Such meetings mean that many of us can speak with first-hand experience. We probably all share similar experience, which suggests that enlargement is extremely important for accession states. They see not only EU membership but NATO membership as a vehicle for advancement. Many countries envisage that NATO membership will provide military security and that EU membership will provide economic stability and security. They wish to be part of those two frameworks.

The processes for securing NATO and EU membership are very different. In respect of NATO, an invitation is issued and the approach is, in many ways, much more positive. The EU process is a bit like an Ofsted report; it has many chapters and a country will not be let in unless it can tick all the boxes. It is very sobering. In the past few years, it has helped many countries to develop a structure that reflects the way in which they wish to shape themselves.

*[Ms Gisela Stuart]*

Most of the accession states—certainly those that hope to be in the first wave—have made it clear that they will hold a referendum even though they have no constitutional need to do so. They want not only to be democratic but to be seen as such. One of the reasons why it would be absolutely disastrous to delay the enlargement process unduly is the fact that opinion polls show that public support is dropping in some of those states.

We must deal with the reason for that and say something about the Irish referendum. I do not want to second-guess why the Irish people voted as they did or to tell them how they should have voted, but I suspect that some of them were saying, "Curses on all your houses." I suspect that the decision, rather than being a vote against EU enlargement or qualified majority voting, was directed against everything other than what is in the treaty of Nice.

In the long term, we must consider that disengagement by the electorate. I am not so arrogant as to say that they do not understand what is involved; they may understand only too well but still not like it. If so, we must accept it, but it would be wise for us to separate disillusionment from the very narrow aims of the treaty. I think that it is fairly unambitious and could have been much more ambitious. I agree with Members who said that it did not contain enough meat to make it an appropriate subject for a constitutional referendum in this country. It is the vehicle for enlargement. I agree with it and I believe that it should be taken forward.

One element of the treaty caused me some anxiety: the common foreign and security policy. I was concerned about the relationship between the EU and NATO. Interestingly, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs makes the following statement in its fifth report:

> "It remains to be seen just how soon differing interpretations of the report's conclusions can be reconciled, and what the statement that EU-led military operations will take place only 'where NATO as a whole is not engaged' will mean in practice."

That caused me some concern. Members of the Committee have just returned from two days in Brussels, where we met the Belgian membership. We also met Hageland representatives and NATO members. It is clear that the EU and NATO recognise that the latter will have first refusal. That is made explicit in the statement to which I have referred, but it has been made more explicit during the past few weeks.

The circumstances in which NATO would choose not to become involved and we would depend on the EU instead are extremely limited. They will be exactly those in which America will not have an interest and the EU will wish to take the first step. The two structures are parallel. While I know that the treaty does not add one extra soldier anywhere, I hope that it allows us to use NATO and EU capabilities far more effectively. Surely parallel and comparable structures are the way forward.

I hope that we will all learn the lesson from the fact that successive Governments throughout Europe—I agree with the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) on this point—have shamefully underspent on defence. I suspect that when the shortfalls are considered, we will find that those in the EU and NATO are broadly the same. I hope that that will result in increased spending. Again, however, that is not part of the treaty itself.

Let us consider what we are deciding tonight: the vehicle for enlargement, on which it would be absolutely disastrous to stall at this stage. I believe that one of the main reasons for central Europe's democratic development is the prospect of membership, which has provided a framework for that to happen.

Perhaps today affords an opportunity for us to restate a United Kingdom interpretation of two matters. The nature of treaties means that there are slight differences of interpretation. First, the United Kingdom subscribes to NATO and the transatlantic model. I accept that a French school of thought suggests that building an alternative power bloc to the United States should drive the European Union. I do not subscribe to that model, and I should be surprised if many hon. Members did. Perhaps now is the time to restate that clearly. Secondly, our model of co-operation is intergovernmental. Important decisions should be taken at ministerial level by elected representatives of member states.

Those views are not incompatible with the treaty of Nice. As I said earlier, although the treaty is not perfect, it is vital. No one, apart from those of the most extreme little Englander mentality who want to reconsider all the treaties and to return to the time before we started negotiations for accession and rerun the 1975 referendum, should be unable to support the Bill tonight.

7 pm

**Mr. Robert Jackson** (Wantage): The speech of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) from the Government Back Benches against the Bill means that there will be a pleasing symmetry, because I shall speak from the Opposition Back Benches for the measure. That reflects the reality of the European debate in this country: the division on Europe cuts across parties—there are different views in all parties.

I shall be brief, as you enjoined us, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to explain why I intend to vote with the Government tonight to ratify the Nice treaty. The Government and the Opposition are applying three-line Whips; there is therefore no doubt that the Bill will be carried. That was the consequence of the last general election. The easiest course for me would be to follow the Opposition Whip and vote against the Bill in the certain knowledge that that would make no difference. I could also continue to abstain, as I did until now, including on Second Reading.

I have decided to vote for the measure because I believe that the treaty of Nice and, therefore, the Bill is essential for the enlargement of the European Union. Nothing has been said in the debate to shake that belief. Like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart), I believe that it is our duty and in our interest to act to secure the early enlargement of the Union.

The Nice treaty contains an essential prerequisite for enlargement: the reallocation of voting weights in the Council of Ministers between current and prospective member states. The battle over the reallocation of votes at the Nice conference was hard fought and acrimonious. Many member states would like the matter to be reopened. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) said, countries such as Belgium were losers in the reallocation, and that is one of the reasons for the failure of the ratification procedure to progress as fast as we would like. It is in Britain's interest not to

reopen the matter, not least because the new allocation substantially increases our weight in the Council of Ministers.

In the light of the off-the-cuff remarks of the President of the Commission in the summer after the failure of the Irish referendum, my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) has argued that the Nice treaty is not necessary for enlargement and that the necessary adaptations of European Union institutions can be accomplished through treaties of accession with the new member states. Let the experts and the non-experts in European law argue about that. I simply share the view of the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell). I observe that Mr. Prodi has not repeated his words.

I appreciate that the votes of prospective member states can be fixed in their treaties of accession, which could state that Poland would have a specific number of votes, Hungary would have a specific number and so on. However, the difference between what we are considering and the position that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) described in respect of the previous enlargement is that separate treaties between the European Union and Poland and between the EU and Hungary cannot reallocate voting weights between the existing member states. Any attempt to proceed in that way would run the risk of the many discontented member states trying to reopen the question. That would delay enlargement and disadvantage Britain.

Conservative Members, supported by the right hon. Member for Llanelli, have argued that although the agreement on votes at Nice is positive from the British point of view, it is outweighed by negative features such as the extension of majority voting, the promulgation of the European Union charter of fundamental rights—not, of course, as a justiciable instrument—and the further development of the common foreign and security policy. I am not persuaded that all those developments are necessarily so negative from a British point of view; I am sure that their significance is far outweighed by the agreement on the new voting structure in the Council of Ministers.

The new leadership of my party appears, at last, to have grasped that the rhetoric of the past four years about the threat of a European superstate was at least overheated. That is the new leadership line, but the debate shows that it has not trickled down to all Back Benchers.

In the recent Conservative party leadership election, I undertook the task of answering letters from Conservatives and others about Europe to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), who was one of the candidates. Hon. Members will appreciate that that was not always an agreeable task. Many good people—and some who are perhaps not so good—have been persuaded that nothing less than a desperate battle for national survival is under way. A sort of 1940 complex—Britain against a united and hostile European mainland—has been generated.

The new leadership line is, thank goodness, that Europe is not such a big issue after all and that there is no need for the Tory home guard to fight on the beaches and elsewhere. That is a welcome and clear admission that the threat of a European superstate has been overstated. If the threat were real, Conservatives and all hon. Members would want to oppose it vigorously.

If the threat of the European superstate is being discounted and we are to put the 1940 complex behind us, why should not Conservatives examine the Nice treaty realistically? I say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes that, like its predecessors at Amsterdam and Maastricht, the Nice treaty constitutes a signal reverse for federalist ambitions. If the treaty is not to be regarded primarily as another milestone on the road to Britain's incorporation in a federal superstate, why are we voting against it? If it is to be so regarded, why are we putting Europe on the back burner? The Conservative party's opposition to the Nice treaty tonight and some of the rhetoric that we have heard in the debate is best understood as a hangover from the party's previous, discredited European policy.

I shall conclude by speaking briefly about why I support the early enlargement of the European Union. I do not support it simply because it will stabilise the politics and security of central and eastern Europe and secure the development of important and growing new markets for British goods and services. I do not support it simply because it will necessitate reforms of European policies such as the common agricultural policy and the budget policy, which should produce welcome improvements from the British point of view. By the way, that will happen only after enlargement, because if we try to achieve it beforehand it will simply block enlargement.

I support enlargement for different reasons. We in Britain have historic obligations in central and eastern Europe, and great states such as ours have a long memory for such matters. I spoke about the 1940 complex in the Conservative party. I want to consider the obligations that arise from another fatal year—1939.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes referred to his European ancestry. I hope that my words will hold some appeal for him because his distinguished forebear—I believe it was his great uncle—the Marquess of Lothian played an important part in those events, although he was more a man of 1938 than 1939. In March 1939, the British Government responded to the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Germans in breach of the Munich agreement by extending guarantees to Poland. In September 1939, Britain went to war to uphold those guarantees.

The British policy of 1939 was not just an admission that Neville Chamberlain was shamefully wrong to speak of the central and eastern European lands as "faraway countries of which we know nothing". Fundamentally, the British policy of 1939 was a commitment by this country to enable the states and peoples of central and eastern Europe to play their full part in a Europe organised on the basis of equality and co-operation.

For reasons with which we are all familiar, it was impossible for this country to deliver on those commitments—in 1939, at Yalta and Potsdam in 1944 and 1945, or throughout the period until 1989. But today, after half a century, in the context of the enlargement of the European Union—an association of free and equal co-operating member states—the time has at last come for us in this House and in this country to do what we promised to do all those years ago. My vote tonight for the ratification of the Nice treaty by the House is my personal contribution to the fulfilment of that historic British obligation.

7.11 pm

**Roger Casale** (Wimbledon): We began considering the Bill in July, well before the terrible events of 11 September in America. I do not say that we must ratify the treaty of Nice because of the international crisis, but I do say that the European Union, which had already reached a critical juncture in its development—like all international institutions—faces a critical challenge to its ability to make decisions, and its capacity to act in the world as we find it today.

Now as, perhaps, at no previous time in its history is the time for the EU to demonstrate to the people of Europe that the nations of Europe are made much stronger by being able to act together through the European Union than they are by acting alone. Indeed, what better mechanism could there be at this time to strengthen Europe's contribution to the international response to terrorism? What better mechanism could there be at this time to expand the European effort in the fight against terrorism than an intensification of European co-operation, and an enlargement of the EU as envisaged by the Nice treaty?

Some Opposition Members have given the impression today that it is business as usual in the European debate. Let me tell them that, in terms of where we pick up the debate about the Nice treaty this evening, we are in a different world from the world we were in when we left that debate before the summer break. Others may believe that consideration of the issues in the treaty should perhaps be postponed until after the immediate international crisis has passed. I believe we should treat the international crisis as a spur, or a wake-up call, to intensify efforts to produce important measures such as those in the Nice treaty, which will accelerate European reform.

We urgently need the introduction, at European level, of measures to counter international terrorism, to strengthen judicial and police co-operation, to tackle money laundering and to operate in many similar fields to strengthen the security of the people of Europe. We need those measures to be agreed quickly, and implemented across as wide a range of European countries as possible. For that reason too, it is important to ratify the treaty of Nice. We are now talking not just about the advantages of expanding the common market and the benefits of trade, but about the advantages that will flow from an enhancement of the ability of EU states to deliver perhaps one of the most fundamental public goods of all: the security of our citizens.

**Chris Grayling** (Epsom and Ewell): Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the Prime Minister would have enjoyed the freedom to perform the admirable role that he is performing on the world stage in helping the United States to tackle the crisis we all face by offering the military support that this country is offering if this country had subscribed wholeheartedly to a common foreign and defence policy that required us to make decisions on a European rather than a national basis?

**Roger Casale:** I am coming to that, but I think part of the reason the Prime Minister has been able to play the role he has played is the desire that the United States has felt to act, together rather than alone in the world. It is for precisely that reason that I think we should exercise leadership within the European context as well, and strengthen our leadership role in Europe too.

The treaty of Nice will enhance the EU's capacity to act in the world. I think we all see and support, and we are debating, the leading role that Britain is playing through the present crisis, but, as I have said, we are able to punch above our weight in the world precisely because America is engaged. It is crucial that we also seek to play a leading role in Europe, and ensure that Europe too punches above and not under its weight during the current international crisis.

I am certainly not one who claims that the European Union is perfect. Indeed, through my work with colleagues in the European Scrutiny Committee I discover more and more of its imperfections every week. Nor do I claim that the EU would be made perfect by the implementation of the Nice treaty. I do, however, see the treaty as part of an historical process—a small new step following on from all the other treaties that made the European Union what it is today, starting with the treaty of Rome in 1958 and proceeding with the Single European Act, the Maastricht treaty and the Amsterdam treaty.

I believe that, in opposing the treaty of Nice, the Opposition seek to turn their backs on Europe at a time when Europe's citizens look to the European Union to deliver greater security, greater international leadership and greater stability as a foundation for peace. The people of Europe must and, I believe, will see that the EU is more than just a common market—that it must renew its historical mission of 50 years ago to strengthen international resolve in consolidating peace. The EU itself, however, is much in need of reform.

I was visited this evening by a constituent who had put in a green card, wanting to talk to me about the Nice treaty before this evening's vote. He came to lobby me—to ask me to vote against the treaty. When I asked my constituent, a Mr. Anderson of Graham road, Wimbledon, why he did not want me to vote with the Government for ratification, he told me a story about a European regulation concerning recycling of elements of his refrigerator, which would be more difficult as a result.

I said "Yes, we must look very critically at regulations presented at European level. Not all of them are doing the good that was intended. But are you aware of the work of the European Scrutiny Committee in the House of Commons? The Committee is there to look at individual regulations, and to weigh the costs and benefits of particular regulations as they relate to the United Kingdom." My constituent said that he was not aware of that.

I think there is a myth that there is no scrutiny of, and no accountability for, what happens and is proposed in Europe at the level of national Parliaments. A great deal that is done in the European Union is imperfect, and may indeed need to be improved—I am reminded of the suggestion that the EU should do less, but better—but the mechanisms for improvement are in place through, for example, the work of the European Scrutiny Committee. Moreover, as I reminded my constituent, decisions in Brussels are not made by bureaucrats. Regulations may be drafted by civil servants, but they are decided by Ministers of State, who have an important democratic legitimacy as a result.

It is important to strengthen the democratic accountability of the EU, and I should like that to be done through a continuation of the upgrading of the European

Scrutiny Committee's work that took place during the last Parliament. It would be wrong to allow the Opposition to build an argument based on the idea, which is certainly not widely held among Labour Members or anywhere else, that people are claiming that the European Union is perfect. We need the type of reform envisaged in the treaty of Nice precisely because of the imperfection and precisely because we need to improve the capacity to make decisions and the quality of decision making at the European level.

Very many great challenges still lie ahead. Perhaps the greatest challenge is to overcome the disconnection between the citizens of Europe and the institutions of Europe, as is still being demonstrated in low turnout at European elections. Another challenge—which will not be resolved by the treaty of Nice—is to increase the transparency and democratic accountability of European institutions. Another important challenge, as I said, is to strengthen further the input and role of national Parliaments in the European Union decision-making process.

I hope that the Select Committee on European Scrutiny will continue to play the role of trying to improve the governance of Europe—a role that we played throughout the intergovernmental conference that led to the treaty of Nice. In future, I hope that not only our Select Committee but national Parliaments more generally will perform that type of role. I also hope that the role of COSAC—Conference of European Affairs Committees—which is the scrutiny committee that brings together representatives from national scrutiny committees, will be enhanced.

I am sure that, both in the House and across Europe, we shall have many interesting discussions as we prepare and look towards the 2004 intergovernmental conference, which will reshape the future of Europe. However, one thing is certain. Today, by Parliament's ratifying the treaty of Nice, Europe will take one more step towards that future. I believe that our ratification of the treaty will make it a better future.

To allow Conservative Members to prevent our ratification of the treaty of Nice, as they are seeking to do, would have the effect of diminishing Britain's role in the world and turning the clock back for the European Union by perhaps 50 years, to a time even before the treaty of Rome was signed. It would postpone, perhaps indefinitely, enlargement of the European Union. It would also, in the post-11 September world, compromise the European Union's ability to take collective action to combat terrorism.

I urge all hon. Members to join Labour Members in the Lobby to ratify the treaty of Nice. Our citizens want, need and deserve the security, prosperity and leadership that the European Union is being challenged—perhaps more so than ever before—to offer. I believe that the European Union now faces its greatest test: to show that it can deliver for the citizens of Europe. Let us ratify the treaty of Nice and enlarge the European Union, and let that test begin.

7.23 pm

**Rev. Ian Paisley** (North Antrim): I am one of the diminishing number of hon. Members who voted in this place on the original legislation to take our United Kingdom into the Common Market. As is well known in the House, I voted against that legislation and am still opposed to it. We had a very warm and hot debate on that occasion, which ended with one of the Labour Whips using his *Hansard* report to batter the head of the then Liberal leader. There were other very warm scenes in that debate.

I believe that the sovereign states of Europe should co-operate fully together when they willingly want to co-operate together, in the spheres in which they want to practise that co-operation. I do not believe in the incorporation of sovereign states in a super-European state. Today, we have heard talk in the House about federalism, but we are not talking about that. Federalism is a policy by which so many people with so much power decide voluntarily to surrender part of that power and establish a federal system. That is not the system in Europe.

Mr. Prodi thinks that he has all the power. He does not ask us whether we would like to give up some power, but tells us, "We have this power, and we give you some say in how that power is used." The hon. Member for Wimbledon (Roger Casale) referred to the many European directives. To deal with those directives, however, the House is offered only a scrutiny Committee. Even if that Committee said to Europe that it did not like a directive and voted unanimously against it, and even if the House endorsed that view, that would make no difference; the European law would stand.

In the earlier debates to which I referred one of the main arguments used to sell Europe to the House was that none of our sovereignty would be diminished. I do not think that, today, anyone looking back on our history would say that that is true; there has been a diminution in the sovereignty of the House. We know that because many cases of European law have made it clear that the House can only take note of decisions made in Europe. We do not have the power to change those decisions.

We were also told that we would have a power of veto, so that if the United Kingdom did not like what was being done in Europe, it could stop it. As we all know, however, there has been a great change in the voting system in Europe and we do not have a power of veto. In fact, much of the power of the majority is being diminished.

When we went into Europe, we had a master-card in one of our industries—the fishing industry. Britain had control of the largest part of the seas of the common market. What has happened? Now, we have to go with a begging bowl to Europe even to have the right to fish our own seas. I remind the House that we got into that serious situation because of the enlargement of Europe. Spain was one of the countries that entered the European Union, and it drove its ships right through the barriers that had been erected.

Some hon. Members know the sad story of our fleets. The Northern Ireland fleet has been cut in half, and now another third of it will be sacrificed. Around the shores of the United Kingdom mainland there is a dearth in the fishing industry. When we entered the common market we had full control and full authority in our own hands. Where did that control and authority go?

The new European Commission President, President Prodi, has taken to issuing statements on what will happen in Europe. The French Prime Minister, too, has issued his theory of what will happen in Europe. However, what is really happening in Europe is that the power of national

*[Rev. Ian Paisley]*

Parliaments is being slowly diminished and debased, so that those Parliaments do not have the power to stop events in Europe.

Some have said that we have done well out of Europe, but Northern Ireland has not done well. Per head of population, Northern Ireland has not received back from Europe the money that it has paid in as a member of the United Kingdom. One would have thought that, by this time, we would have had that much. Until recently, the south of Ireland was receiving £5 million per day from the common market. That money has stopped now and, as we know, the Celtic tiger of its economy is going down the drain—we hear announcements daily on its vast economic drift. We have to face up to those issues.

Will our economy advance if we bring in other states? This country's farming economy will certainly not advance when we bring in the other countries of Europe. There will be produce on the market with which our farmers cannot contend. Our farmers have to meet the standards that we demand in our food production and ensure that those standards are upheld, whereas some of the countries that will be brought in adhere to very low standards indeed. Those of us who know something about the workings of the European Parliament know that when Greece joined with its low standards of agriculture, subsidies to the rest were withdrawn and an attempt was made to raise Greek agriculture to a decent standard. If that happens with all the countries that wish to join at present, I do not know what will happen to agriculture. More and more people are coming to realise that the common agricultural policy is not good for farmers or for the housewife, and the House should carefully consider that issue. I will, of course, vote against the treaty tonight.

7.31 pm

**Dr. Stephen Ladyman** (South Thanet): In my parliamentary career, I have usually been called at about ten minutes to 9, by which time the Whips are telling me to keep my contribution down to five minutes, so I am grateful to catch your eye so early, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I shall bear in mind your admonition and be as brief as possible so that others can make their contributions to the debate.

It is an honour to take part in a debate that has included a contribution from the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who is unfortunately not in his place at the moment. He has the honour—if I may call it that—of being the only hon. Member who has beaten me in an election. I stood against him in 1987, but despite that he was the first Member to greet me when I arrived here in 1997 and to give me a kindly welcome to the House. It is a pleasure for me to be on the same side of the argument with him tonight.

It was also a pleasure to follow the passionate and eloquent remarks of the hon. Member for North Antrim (Rev. Ian Paisley). He mentioned the pooling—or the loss, as he would put it—of sovereignty that this country has experienced as a result of joining the European Union, but we chose to do so voluntarily. We made a democratic decision to put our sovereignty into the pool because we perceived that we would get democratic benefits from doing so. If those benefits have not materialised, we have serious work to do to obtain them. The fact remains that we took the decision to give up some of our freedom because we felt that that would increase our influence and effectiveness.

As the hon. Gentleman spoke, I was reminded of my experience in the past few years of coaching a boys' football team in my constituency. I started coaching them when they were nine, and finished last year when they were 16. When they were nine, they were tiny little boys who each felt that they had complete freedom to run anywhere they liked on the pitch. We more or less convinced the goalkeeper that he had to stay towards the back, but the rest felt that they could do whatever they liked. When one got the ball, it was head down and straight for the goal, with not a thought of passing it or involving any other member of the team. Over the years of coaching that football team, we convinced them that they would be more effective if, instead of playing as 11 individuals, they were a team of 11 players. They had more impact for their effort if they limited their personal freedom and one stayed on the left wing, one stayed on the right wing, one of them went up front, some of them stayed in the middle and some stayed at the back. They limited their freedom, but they became more effective and won more matches. They got more bang for their buck. In other words they pooled their personal sovereignty, but they got something back for it, just as we did as a nation when we joined NATO.

Earlier, we discussed article 5, which is a far greater pooling of sovereignty than anything in the treaty of Nice. It requires us, almost with no ability to modify our undertaking, to go to the aid of any nation in NATO that is under attack. We have no choice in the matter because we have agreed that if one of our NATO colleagues is attacked we will go to war to defend it. We gave up our freedom of action because it made us safer and gave us the power of those other countries at our back to protect us in our turn.

If the events of 11 September have done anything, they have made hon. Members of all parties rethink our views and positions in politics, and our country's position. We have seen how the freedom that we have as an individual nation has allowed us to act flexibly and forcefully. We have seen my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister take a position of influence on the world stage because we have acted effectively as an individual country. It may therefore have crossed some people's minds that we should be a power by ourselves again, forming ad hoc alliances and coalitions as necessary. However, the message that I get from the events of 11 September is that it is only by working together, pooling power, working with other people and forming coalitions that we will achieve anything.

The vision that I have continued to develop since the terrible events of 11 September is of a European Union that could find ways to make decisions more quickly and act on them more effectively. We have all seen how decisions in the United Nations can come down to the lowest common acceptable denominator. The European Union should not make decisions in that way, as has been part of the problem over the years, because we need a European Union that works collectively to look after its member states' interests. We should know that the interests of the Spanish, the Italians, the French and the Germans are our interests. We should do what is in their interests, knowing that they will do what is in our

interests. Then we could make decisions together properly and effectively. The treaty of Nice is about starting that process.

The treaty is about extending qualified majority voting so that we can make decisions in that way. The only criticism that I have of the treaty in the light of what happened on 11 September is that the issues to which QMV will be extended seem puny and paltry. We should perhaps consider extending them to broader areas to improve our effectiveness. I therefore welcome the decision by the Swedish presidency to open up the debate on the democratisation of Europe and bringing power back to the people. I hope that we ratify the treaty of Nice tonight and move on to the next treaty, which should consider second chambers and the representation of national Parliaments in Europe. We should start the process of integration and of aiming to work together more effectively.

Sometimes our constituents do not recognise the arcane discussions that we have about sovereignty, the treaty and various articles. They look to what the EU can do for them, and I have no problem with that. My constituency of South Thanet is in east Kent, and we probably get more benefits from Europe than anywhere else. Enlargement will mean a large share for us of that annual £1.76 billion of extra business. It will mean more exports from east Kent businesses and more jobs in east Kent in transport, manufacturing and services.

I can already show my constituents what we have done with objective 2 money in Thanet, which still has one of the highest unemployment rates in the UK. It was the EU that came to our aid with money when the then British Government would not. I can show my constituents what Europe has built for us. I can show them estates where adolescents—they are just kids, really—are already alcoholics on bootlegged booze. The only way to deal with that problem is to address the movement of alcohol and bootlegging across Europe. I can show them drug addicts and tell them about what the EU is doing to crack down on the movement of drugs. I can tell them about our current security concerns regarding the channel tunnel, Manston airport or the ports at Dover and Ramsgate. We can deal with those security problems only as part of the European Union.

Big words like constitutional issues and democratisation are very important to us in the House when we talk about the future of Europe, but other things matter more in the street. We must always keep in mind the vision that the EU means that our country will be stronger and more prosperous.

Finally, it has been said that the EU has brought an end to war in Europe. We remember the horrors of the second world war, but the war in Europe has been going on for 3,000 years. Those who doubt that should come to my constituency. I can show them Richborough castle, which was built by Julius Caesar, or the beaches where the Vikings landed. I can show them where Hengist and Horsa arrived from Saxony, and decided to stay and build the English nation. I can show them Ramsgate, built to fight Napoleon, or the business park—now occupied by Pfizer, the pharmaceutical company—that was built as part of the fighting effort in the first world war. I can take them to Manston airport, one of the bases involved in the battle of Britain.

We have been fighting the Europeans for thousands of years, but the existence of the European Union means that that battle is at an end. It means that we are bringing security to Europe, as well as prosperity. The treaty of Nice aids that process, and the House should ratify it tonight.

7.42 pm

**Mr. Jonathan Djanogly** (Huntingdon): I enjoyed the speech by the hon. Member for South Thanet (Dr. Ladyman), and the football analogy that he made. However, a football match lasts only for an afternoon, whereas when currencies, freedoms and vetoes are given up, they are given up for ever. That is an important distinction.

I certainly want a forward-looking Europe, but the Bill could lead to a regressive Europe. We want Europe to seek to expand its borders and to enhance its citizens' security, but the Bill will act to compound the introspective, exclusive, rich-member-club mentality that currently pervades many of Europe's institutions.

To my mind, the Europe of the future should place our destiny in the context of the world economy. The new reality is one of reduced tariffs, and there is a move towards ending protectionism. I fear, however, that this Bill will serve to hide Europe under a stone, and that it will defer the inevitable impact of world competition, improved technology and communications, and the massive strides achieved over recent years by the lightly regulated developing nations.

The weakening in the treaty of the position of the individual member state is clear. It is evident in article 4 of protocol A, which relates to the size of the European Commission. It reduces the number of Commissioners for Britain, France, Germany and Italy and will reduce the number again when the EU expands to 27 members.

That weakening is also evident in article 214.2, which provides that the Commission President would be nominated by member states acting by qualified majority voting rather than by unanimity. It is also evident in the re-weighting of member states' votes. That re-weighting means that, in a union of 27 states, the United Kingdom's votes will fall from 12.2 per cent. of the total to 8.4 per cent. That point has not been made yet this evening.

**Mr. Hendrick:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the UK's position will in fact be greatly enhanced? We have the same number of weighted votes—29—as Germany, even though that country has a population of 82 million, which is 25 million more than our 57 million?

**Mr. Djanogly:** That point has been made several times in this debate. The distribution of weighted votes changes as the number of member states rises. After enlargement, the UK's position is likely to deteriorate.

Of the existing 70 treaty articles requiring unanimity, some 29 are moved to qualified majority voting, and it is important that people fully realise how we will be undermining our current veto powers in many key areas. The point was made very clearly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory). Those areas include external border checks, conditions for freedom of movement for third-country nationals, asylum laws, financial assistance to aid member states in financial difficulties, the introduction of the euro, trade policy,

*[Mr. Djanogly]*

social provisions concerning working conditions and social exclusion, support for industry, economic co-operation with third countries, procedures and rules for the Court of Auditors and procedures for allowing other states to join. To my mind, there is therefore no doubt that the effect of the treaty will be to reduce our veto powers and thereby our power within the EU.

The treaty goes much further, however. The Bill assumes that by weakening the powers of individual nation states, European institutions will somehow become more adaptable to an enlarged union. To my mind, that is an exercise in papering over the cracks. The problems of the European Union will not be solved by tinkering with the voting systems of its institutions, as the problems do not mainly lie with how votes are cast but with the institutions themselves.

The European Union seems to find it very easy to blame its difficulties on what it sees as its current unwieldy voting systems. It frequently blames the slowness of the enlargement process on the candidate member states' economies, yet it remains reluctant to look into its own structural problems. We need to realise that countries in the east of Europe frequently operate their economies more efficiently than we operate ours. It is all too easy to assume that those countries are backward and ought to comply with our own—sometimes outdated—institutions and regulations.

The Nice treaty almost totally ignores that reality. It looks at ways of bolstering the inadequate institutions of the EU. For instance, its effect will not in any way amend the provisions of the common agricultural policy. Many hon. Members have mentioned the CAP in the debate, but the treaty will provide additional mechanisms to keep new member states out of the CAP.

It is true that there are more farmers in Poland than in the rest of Europe added together, and that the cost of the CAP would mean that it probably would not last a week there, if it were adopted. However, the position of agriculture will not be improved by banning Poland's access to the CAP and by effectively introducing double trading conditions for agricultural products from the east. I should be interested to hear from the Minister how the European institutions are likely to be strengthened by the treaty, or how the basic community concept of free movement of goods and services will be enhanced.

Article 137 of the treaty will subject to qualified majority voting social provisions concerning health and safety at work, working conditions, information and consultation of workers, social exclusion and modernisation of social protection systems. Again, it is quite clear what the aim is. The provisions will be used as a method of curtailing the competitive advantage of eastern states that have lower labour and production costs than we do. I predict that it will also be used to force the UK to adopt more and more European employment regulations, each of which will continue to chip away at our own country's relatively free economy—or what is left of it after this Government's adoption of the social chapter and the raft of new regulations introduced over recent years. Further proposed regulations—such as paternity rights, and statutory rights for paid leave for adoptive parents—will also have an effect. Article 137 will certainly not aid European enlargement in any way.

In the same way, article 157, which it requires the EU to ensure that the conditions necessary for the competitiveness of its industry exist, could well become a licence to intervene in the businesses of nation states, thus reducing their efficiency, disrupting market forces and creating yet more uneven and politically motivated playing fields. Furthermore, it would be interesting to know whether the Government have considered the costs involved in supporing outdated industries in the context of the Bill, as this policy could be extremely costly.

The days when the Government and the European Union said that they did not want a two-speed Europe are long gone. Now it is quite the reverse. The treaty of Nice is clearly aimed at enabling a multi-class Europe in which certain members can be made second-class citizens to shore up the outdated institutions that were formed on the premise of a single-speed Europe.

In theory, the new voting proposals adopting the concept of a multi-speed Europe could have been drafted so as to provide a flexibility that would have enabled member states to opt out of further integration proposals to which they may have objected, but the abolition of vetoes makes that unlikely. In practice, I fear that we will see the levelling down of members' competitive advantages, the banning of goods from new eastern European members, and the restriction of their people's freedom to work in the west. Unfortunately, rather than aiding enlargement, the treaty of Nice could be used as a baton to reinforce a sophisticated anti-dumping strategy against new eastern European members in particular.

So far I have expressed my concerns about the further loss of our national competitive trade advantages and about how the treaty could effectively be used to hinder rather than aid enlargement. However, I believe that we need to put the treaty of Nice into the global context. Here, too, I have concerns.

One of the effects of the Nice treaty will be to provide the mechanics to support the collection of values, many of them alien to the traditions of this country, that have been built up in western European countries over the past few decades. I refer to the cults of bureaucracy, politically motivated redistribution and inefficient welfare systems. Many eastern European countries are prepared to pay a very high cost for entry to the European Union, so they may well agree to bear the pain of entry—to lose their competitive advantages, to accept being regarded as second-class European citizens and to turn a blind eye to the excesses of "welfarism" to which they will have to subject their young economies. We can, at the same time, be fairly sure that the countries of the far east and the developing countries of the Indian subcontinent, Africa and south America are unlikely to follow the same route.

We live in a global economy—a massive trading area where competition is fierce, the World Trade Organisation is breaking down tariffs and protectionism against developing countries, and wage and production costs are already lower. That is the direction in which we are heading.

The dissolution of the old eastern bloc has made international relations more, not less, complicated. Our recent requests for developing countries' help in maintaining the so-called new world order might not come cheap. Is there any truth in the report that Pakistan is to have a number of the tariffs on its products cut or

abolished as part of the arrangements for our war on terrorism? In any event, my point is that the world is moving towards free trade and low production costs, while the Nice treaty will be used for the opposite effect.

I recently spoke to the owner of some call centres in the United Kingdom. The company has recently set up a call centre in India, employing graduates who speak perfect English and cost one fifth of UK equivalent employees. Modern communications mean that calls made to India cost the same as those to a call centre in Glasgow. Thousands of what would have been British jobs are to be lost and we do not seem to appreciate that globalisation is no longer a future threat but a present reality. Indeed, the European Union as a whole does not seem to appreciate that.

The question arises as to whether the forces of federalism in Europe actually want enlargement of the Union. If new member states join before federalism is achieved, it is unlikely that the cause of federalism will be advanced by any of the new members. Could this be part of the reason why a treaty that was meant to be instituted for the purposes of encouraging enlargement could be used for the opposite effect? Could member states that support federalism be holding back on allowing enlargement until such time as plans for federalism are in place, effectively using enlargement as a bargaining chip for their own ends?

The issue will become clearer as we head for the constitutional conference planned by the European Union for 2004. However, I suggest that the countries of eastern Europe are worth more than bargaining chips, and that we ignore the urgent need to widen the Union and enhance European security at our peril.

Europe is at an important crossroads. We can accept the inevitability of the global economy and use the opportunity of enlargement to restructure our European institutions, embrace the new economy and sustain our long-term viability. Alternatively, we can stifle what enterprise and competitive advantages still remain on our continent.

To my mind, the treaty of Nice will be used to facilitate the latter option. That will, I am sure, be to the detriment of British business and employment prospects. That is why I continue to oppose the Bill.

7.56 pm

**Mr. Chris Bryant** (Rhondda): I had intended to start my speech by saying that the single word "Europe" seems to inspire extraordinary feats of imaginative power, but I had not reckoned on the speech of the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Djanogly). It seemed to beat even the imaginative powers of Nicholas Ridley, who said years ago of the European Union:

"This is all a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe."

Myths and misunderstandings may not matter in many areas of life. I say that as someone who, as a child, believed for many years not only in Santa Claus but that the Lord's prayer went, "Our Father, a chart in heaven, Harold be thy name." Why Harold should have been His name, I have no idea. I was also confused in the collects by the author of peace and the lover of concord, which at least had some European context.

It is very important that we do not have myths and misunderstandings about this issue. When I go round my constituency in the Rhondda, it is very rare for anybody to mention the European Union to me. However, a few people do and one of the most common things said is, "I voted for a common market, not the European Union." We have heard that sentiment several times today from Conservative Members.

To say that there is a difference between a common market and the European Union is a false dichotomy. The free movement of goods when it comes to buying cars at EU prices in this country should, of course, be easier. However, without addressing issues of state aid and unfair competition from article 87, which was article 92 in the treaty, it will be impossible to bring about a common market.

The United Kingdom is the only country in the world, apart from the United States of America, that has a positive balance of trade in audio-visual services. If we are to achieve further gains in selling our television programmes, films and CDs in France, Germany and Italy, we will have to change copyright law and ensure further harmonisation across the EU.

**Mr. John Redwood** (Wokingham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Bryant:** The right hon. Gentleman has been here for hardly any of the debate, so I do not think that I will give way.

**Mr. Redwood** *rose—*

**Mr. Bryant:** No, I will not give way. The right hon. Gentleman has not been here for long and some of us have suffered extremely lengthy speeches from his colleagues.

**Chris Grayling:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me. As he is not certain about the difference between the common market and the European Union, may I ask him to comment on a specific example? I have friends in the police force who were forced to change their shift pattern as a result of a European directive. They did not want to, but had to change to a pattern that made them more tired and meant that they enjoyed the job less and did it less effectively. Why is it necessary for decisions about the shift patterns of our police forces to be dictated at a supranational level?

**Mr. Bryant:** I do not know the instance to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but on the broader issue of how we achieve a common market, we have to stray into areas that might otherwise be considered to have nothing to do with trade. As I said, copyright could be considered to be an area that is primarily of cultural significance and, therefore, the prerogative solely of member states, but if we are to achieve a common market in audio-visual services, we have to consider copyright.

**Dr. Ladyman:** The same directive to which the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) referred provided tens of thousands of people with holidays for the first time.

**Mr. Bryant:** Indeed.

There is now a common European market in drugs. That is an established fact and, therefore, we have to have a common law enforcement policy. It need not cover

*[Mr. Bryant]*

every detail, but we need enhanced co-operation between the police and other organisations throughout Europe if we are to deal with a problem that affects us in this country.

One can produce countless examples to show that trying merely to produce a common market for which people originally voted requires us now to stray into areas that might otherwise be considered as creating a union. What people voted for many years ago is also no longer relevant because the world has changed. When I was born, people did not travel as much as they do now. The health service in other countries now matters just as much to my constituents as the health service in this country, not least because a quarter of them travel to Spain every year. Whether they receive support from the health service in Spain, and the quality of that service, are what matters to them. It also matters to them whether the aeroplane in which they are travelling has met certain safety standards and whether health and safety regulations are incorporated in the laws of Spain, France, Italy, Germany and all the other countries they visit. Consumer protection is an essential part of the changed world, which we must now incorporate to meet the original objectives of the union.

Another misunderstanding that has been perpetrated by Conservative Members is that it is an issue of either the United States or the European Union—we have to be with one or the other. That view is particularly prevalent on the Tory Benches and may, indeed, be shared by the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith). I gather that one of his prominent supporters in the Chingford Conservative party told him immediately after he announced that he was standing for the leadership that he would rather be in the 53rd state of America than join Europe, and apparently the right hon. Gentleman agreed. We will ignore the figures, which are obviously a mistake—but Conservatives are not very good on facts. It is patently untrue that Britain has to make a single choice between the United States of America and the European Union.

My rather more obscure difficulty with some of the views expressed today—another myth—stems from further back, to 1848, when Palmerston said:

> "We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow."

Those words are often repeated. It is profoundly wrong that we should now try to maintain that view as the foundation stone of our diplomatic efforts. As we must know by now, allies for a day are not allies that are worth having any longer. True patriotic diplomacy builds long-term, not just short-term, alliances. Our interests change from year to year.

On the treaty, we need to ask only three questions. The first is whether further reform is desirable and/or necessary. We have already heard the Conservative answer. We heard it in May 1992 when, in his maiden speech, the Leader of the Opposition said:

> "If now is not the time to put the line in the sand and say, 'Thus far and no further', when are we to say that?"—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 357.]

He was referring to the Maastricht treaty—and Conservative Members clearly agree with that view now, judging from what they have said today.

At that time, however, the right hon. Gentleman seemed to oppose any change. Even if that treaty had been changed, as the shadow Foreign Secretary suggested we might change this treaty in some a-la-carte way to make it acceptable, it would not have been improved in his view—this is obscure, I fear. He also said that a bite from a Rottweiller hurts just as much as a bite from a Pekinese. *[Interruption.]* That was the view of the Leader of the Opposition, who was wrong then and is wrong now.

Enlargement is vital. Whatever some hon. Members have said, it is at the heart of the issue under debate. Improved trade for United Kingdom businesses will undoubtedly follow from enlargement. The hon. Member for North Antrim (Rev. Ian Paisley) referred to the problems when Spain acceded to the EU, but British trade with Spain increased by 40 per cent. in the two years following its accession. We can expect similar benefits for British industry with the accession of the other 12 applicant members.

United Kingdom industry needs to compete on a level playing field with that of Poland and the other countries that will be coming into the EU. That will not happen unless we advance enlargement at some speed. Furthermore, we need the applicant countries to adopt the principles that we have to adopt on state aid. Improved travel safety throughout the 12 applicant countries would also be good. Hon. Members have also said that politics in eastern Europe will be stabilised, which would be an essential result of enlargement. I submit to Conservative Members that that cannot happen unless the decision-making processes of the EU—in the Council, the Commission and the Parliament—change. There are too many Commissioners. There should be fewer if the Commission is to do its business effectively and expeditiously. It is unimaginable for 27 countries to produce 35 Commissioners. The process of appointing the President of the Commission is unsustainable now, and would be even more so. If we do not make the changes required by the treaty of Nice, it will lead to poor decisions. The common commercial policy of article 214 is a significant advance, as is the improved article 31, which will make a significant difference for this country.

We need to improve the effectiveness of the EU in international negotiations. The French determination to ensure that cultural and intellectual property issues are always treated under unanimity may in the long term prove to be a mistake for this country. Of course, we need the speeding up of the Court of First Instance and the European Court of Justice, which will be expedited by the treaty.

Therefore, the first question we must ask is whether reform is desirable and/or necessary, but the next question is whether it is a good deal for the UK. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Djanogly) said in his inaccurate portrayal of re-weighting in the Council and the reassignation of votes, Britain will get a better deal. Furthermore, our ability to block proposals that will not be in our interests will be improved. Unanimity on tax, social security, defence, budget, border controls and treaty change will be preserved, which is essential—it is what we went into this process hoping to achieve.

Finally, we must ask ourselves whether this is the right time for us to ratify the treaty. Contrary to what several Conservative Members said, if we vote against ratification this evening we will undoubtedly delay enlargement. One hon. Member suggested that it would be possible to call

an intergovernmental conference tomorrow if we really wanted to. Clearly, that is living in cloud cuckoo land. The processes of unpicking the treaty and reconstituting another would take a considerable number of months. Furthermore, if this country were to say that we did not want to go forward with ratification, I would doubt that we would see enlargement in the next 10 years, let alone the next 10 months.

On the Irish referendum, I recognise that the unanimity principle should, and always will, apply to treaty change, but that does not mean that because one small country has voted, every other country must adopt exactly the same position as that first country. It is a profoundly undemocratic process to say, "They have decided, so we cannot even take a decision for ourselves."

**Mr. Hendrick:** What was my hon. Friend's view on the slogan that was used by the eventual victors in the referendum in Ireland:

"If you don't know, vote No"?

Was it a victory for ignorance or for common sense?

**Mr. Bryant:** I thank my hon. Friend. I started my comments this evening by saying that the great myth-making machine that has spread itself throughout the European Union, largely assisted by members of the Conservative party as they wander around Europe, has been profoundly unhelpful to the debate and has made it far more difficult for Britain to get advantages for our country.

I agree in the end with the words of de Gaulle in 1959:

"Yes, it is Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, it is Europe, the whole of Europe that will decide the fate of the world."

It is a unique moment in the post-war history of the world for Europe to act as the world champion for democracy, for internationalism, for justice and, indeed, for peace. We can take that forward only if we ratify the treaty.

8.11 pm

**Mr. Hugo Swire** (East Devon): We have gone over quite a lot of old ground this afternoon, leading me to misquote the late great F.E. Smith—leaving me perhaps none the wiser, but certainly better informed. I shall try not to cover that old ground, but instead concentrate on the matter before us tonight.

The treaty of Nice, we were told, is vital to the enlargement process. Indeed, the Government's election manifesto claimed:

"It is vital we ratify the Treaty of Nice which is essential to enlargement"—

so it must be true. But as we heard this afternoon, on 7 June this year the Irish—a small nation, I grant you—voted against the Nice treaty, and those 54 per cent. of Irish citizens who ticked the "No" box on their ballot papers effectively threw a spanner in the works of the European Union machine, so much so that we were told that the "No" vote was

"a slap in the face of the applicant countries".

The Germans "regretted the Irish decision". The Slovaks were "disappointed by the vote". Those sentiments were understandable. After all, was not the treaty about enlargement? The treaty was dead, or at least on hold, so it stands that enlargement, too, must be in the same predicament. As if to confirm that view, Romano Prodi hot-footed it over to Ireland to reassure the Irish that they had misunderstood the treaty and that all would be well.

However, enlargement was not totally dead. In an interview with *The Irish Times*—these are not off-the-cuff remarks, as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson)—Mr. Prodi explained that "thankfully", the treaty of Amsterdam allowed for enlargement of up to a total of 20 countries. He continued:

"It's without any problem up to 20 members, and those beyond 20 members have only to put in the accession agreement some notes of change, some clause. But legally, it's not necessary. This does not mean the Irish referendum is not important. But from this specific point of view, enlargement is possible without Nice".

Enlargement will go ahead, irrespective. Even on the day of the referendum, the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Mr. Günter Verheugen, said that a "No" vote in Ireland's referendum

"would not affect the enlargement process. We would continue with the same speed and the same quality."

Could enlargement be possible without Nice? It must be so, despite mixed signals from the Foreign Secretary, who said in the Chamber:

"It is true that a treaty is necessary for enlargement; it is not true in a legal and technical sense that the Nice treaty is necessary for enlargement. We would have to have an alternative treaty. Nice is what is available at the moment."—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2001; Vol. 370, c. 287.]

Those sentiments were reiterated this afternoon, and are reiterated now and again, by the Minister for Europe.

Was Nice about enlargement? After all that hype and hot air, was it really relevant to enlargement? Closer examination of the documents that emanated from Nice reveal a different story. The truth is that the bulk of the business at Nice had nothing to do with enlargement. Members may have been surprised to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) that the annexes detailing the process for enlargement account for only about 5 per cent. of the contents of the treaty and the presidency conclusions. So much for Nice being all about enlargement. The amendments proposed by the Nice treaty are not yet in force, nor will they be until at least the end of 2002. It is reported that a second Irish referendum will not take place until after the Irish general election, which must be held by June 2002, and no doubt pressure will be brought to bear on the recalcitrant Irish between now and then.

As I have said, we are assured that enlargement will go ahead irrespective, so I ask again, what was Nice really about? Opposition Members have been strong supporters of the enlargement process. We said—and speaker after speaker has said it again this afternoon—that we would ratify tomorrow a treaty that was genuinely about enlargement. Therefore, we are right to oppose the Bill. It has virtually nothing to do with enlargement, and anyway, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) said, we may like the lock, but we do not like the stock and the barrels.

I add one remark before I finish. Our Belgian friends hold the presidency of the European Union. To put them out of their misery, will someone please tell them the truth

*[Mr. Hugo Swire]*

behind the Nice treaty? They, too, are labouring under a misapprehension. The Belgian presidency makes much of future enlargement:

"With the new Treaty of Nice, the door has been opened once and for all for the biggest enlargement operation in the history of the European Union"—

not, as we have heard this afternoon, that the Belgian Government have done much to ratify the treaty.

Only one thing will genuinely pave the way for successful enlargement, and it is not the Nice treaty. I say that as one who passionately believes in enlargement. My right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes has an Italian grandmother. We heard that the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) had a Glaswegian grandmother. Well, I have a Slovenian mother-in-law, desperate to be enlarged—or rather, desperate for the land of her birth to be admitted into the family of Europe—and I suspect that she is influenced by *her upbringing in a communist environment*, an experience that she no doubt shares with the late grandmother of the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

It is my belief that the only thing that can pave the way for a successful enlargement is reform of the common agricultural policy—a subject that, I note, is treated, whenever mentioned, like the plague. The last attempt, as we all know, at limited reform of the common agricultural policy was made by the German presidency in 1999. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), who argued that it is time for the issue to be addressed once and for all. That is certainly what the people to whom I speak in Devon and the west country generally are saying. Without the immediate reform of the CAP, they view all the other arguments and discussions as irrelevant. There is no doubt that people have been left feeling alienated, disconnected and, frankly, bewildered by our discussions on the extension of qualified majority voting and other matters that seem to them to be far removed from their everyday lives.

In conclusion, the Nice treaty represents a missed opportunity. The Conservative party envisages a modern, forward-looking and flexible Europe, which also addresses the inherent problems that have been discussed in this debate. We will continue to work to that end, but we do not recognise any of that in the Nice treaty, and that is why we shall oppose its ratification.

8.20 pm

**Jon Trickett** (Hemsworth): I do not agree with the hon. Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire), who seems to approach the EU with almost theological principles—as, I am afraid, do some of my hon. Friends, but from another point of view. I approach the EU from the point of view of a pragmatist, and most people in Europe share that view. Many of my hon. Friends who have pressed the case to accelerate integration and the deepening of the EU should be very careful about their desire to press forward.

The people of Europe have generally indicated that they are somewhat disconnected from the political process, especially in relation to the EU. We would be ill advised to disregard the increasing scepticism that the people of Europe feel towards the political class and the European project. To its credit, the EU recognised that problem in a discussion document that was issued during the summer. It is an amazing document; it says, "Look at us—aren't we unpopular?" Some 87 per cent. of the people sampled by the EU for the document said that they had no connection at all to the debate about the Nice treaty—it had no relevance to them. That view occasioned breast beating in the Commission and by the presidency. To try to improve things, they proposed to wipe away 80,000 pages of treaty text and documentation and to simplify the vocabulary that they use in an attempt to increase transparency and accountability.

If we were to apply the Hemsworth test, or that of any of our constituencies, to the EU, we would find that the problem was not so much one of the various treaties, which we may or may not have signed, containing superfluous pages, but whether our constituents and the people of Europe felt that they had access to prosperity. That is the test that we should use to judge the processes of enlargement and integration.

It is undoubtedly the case that prosperity probably will be enhanced by the EU's enlargement. The Minister referred to a £4 billion increase in gross domestic product. That figure may or may not be accurate, but I have no doubt that an enlarged market would generate increased wealth over time. We know that market economies do not operate in ways that guarantee the equality of access to that prosperity for all the people in that market. The EU's founding fathers and mothers well understood the processes of social exclusion and social division that can work alongside the enhancement of wealth and prosperity. That is why they devised several mechanisms to attempt to safeguard the communities that would suffer from exclusion because of the enlargement and strengthening of the European market.

I accept that the British economy will benefit from the increased prosperity generated by the EU's enlargement, but it would be preposterous to argue that that will have a completely even effect across all the communities that we represent. It is clear that further restructuring will take place in the British economy as a result of enlargement. If labour costs in the east are compared with those in the United Kingdom, it is apparent to everyone that British companies may well seek to take advantage of the larger market, but not necessarily by using British labour. In fact, British jobs may be displaced by labour in the east. To take a long-term, historical view, that may not be a bad thing, but we will be failing in our duty if we do not acknowledge that that will be an inevitable consequence of enlargement. The treaty of Nice and the Bill should be used to enhance some of the powers contained in the instruments that the EU devised. I am afraid that, by that test, the treaty of Nice fails.

I shall briefly refer to three of the available mechanisms, the first of which is the ability of a national Government to use their tax and spending powers to help to control economic activity within their national boundaries. That will certainly be circumscribed if we are to enter into the later stages of monetary union. Most hon. Members will know about the growth and stability pact, which has already led the EU and the Chancellor to cross swords over his spending plans. Given the possibility that the economy will go through a rough period, the growth and stability pact may well impact on the British Government's public expenditure and tax plans. That is worrying and may lead to the circumscribing of the

national Government's powers to protect those communities that could be affected by enlargement and the world downturn.

My second point is that the structural funds were devised in the knowledge that the European market would have a differential impact on different communities—for example, some would suffer from exclusion. That will be the case in the future. Women, migrant groups and those in peripheral areas or areas of traditional industry have all suffered from the restructuring promoted by the EU. All of them were recipients—perhaps insufficiently in some respects—of structural funding, but enlargement of the community to the east poses big questions as to whether structural funds will be adequate to protect communities such as the one that I represent.

The third mechanism is contentious, but it is an important tool in the armoury of anyone wishing to resist the processes of fragmentation and social exclusion. Article 137, the so-called social chapter, is barely moved forward by this Bill. Given Mr. Deputy Speaker's strictures, I will not go into that matter, but I have studied in detail the social chapter and the documents on it produced by the Library. I believe that it is possible to argue that article 137 has been weakened. It certainly has not been strengthened and we need such instruments to protect us and to ensure that the prosperity that Ministers and those leading the British nation's negotiations have promised is to be shared by all our communities.

I utter a word of caution. If we find that enlargement produces further social division and exclusion as the result of the aggregation of wealth elsewhere, we will pay. We have already received a clear warning in the European elections, in various referendums and in the general election that people are becoming disaffected. If they believe that powers are escaping from the nation state and they do not regard the EU as an ally, I fear for the future. With that warning, I look forward with interest to the rest of the debate.

8.30 pm

**Angus Robertson** (Moray): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate, having spoken on earlier stages of the Bill.

I speak on behalf of the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru. Our position on EU matters is well established. We are in favour of full national status for Scotland and Wales, with their having equality of status with other member states. We seek a seat at the top table and do not wish to hang on the coat tails of Westminster Ministers. We do not believe that Scotland and Wales are too poor, too stupid or too peripheral to have a direct say at the top table in Europe.

**Mr. Iain Luke** (Dundee, East): The Scottish National party's policy has been one of independence in Europe and has been roundly rejected by the Scottish electorate on numerous occasions. Does the hon. Gentleman think it is worth while to continue to push that policy?

**Angus Robertson:** As a democrat, I am always in favour of pushing democratic policies. That is the future for Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom and Europe. Perhaps even the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that, from a Scottish and Welsh perspective, there is a certain irony in the fact that our nations are about to be overtaken by accession nations that were formerly members of the Warsaw pact. Quite rightly, they will take their seat at the top table before us.

I wish to discuss the specifics of the Bill and the two guiding principles of the SNP's and Plaid Cymru's attitude towards it. Many Members have spoken about enlargement and the wish to end the artificial division of our continent—the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) put that case most eloquently. To achieve that end, we will, in a bipartisan spirit, join the non-Eurosceptic parties in the House and vote for the Bill. That is our first guiding principle.

The second relates to the fact that the Bill will not hinder the progress of Scotland and Wales towards the normality of full national status, should the people of Scotland and Wales desire that. Contrary to the view expressed by some Conservative Members, the Nice treaty entrenches the rights of nation states. Through qualified minority thresholds and provisions for minorities, the EU is a confederal and not a federal Europe. We welcome that.

In the past, some people hoped for a strong Europe of the regions, and that model has been outlined by my Plaid Cymru colleague, the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr. Thomas). Everyone acknowledges that that is no longer a prospect and that the only show in town is full national member status.

On the re-weighting of Council voting, it is interesting that the Nice treaty makes it explicitly clear for the first time that direct representation by the nations of these islands would secure more votes than Britain is currently entitled to under the treaty. According to the re-weighting and the predication on a population basis incorporated in table 2 of the declaration on the enlargement of the European Union, Scotland would have seven votes, which is seven more than at present; Wales would have four votes, four more than at present; and England could have no fewer than 27 votes. That would give a grand total of 38 votes as opposed to the planned 29. If, as unionists on both sides of the House argue, we always share the same interest, surely it makes sense to increase our voting strength by 40 per cent.

There are some unresolved issues. During the Committee stage, I asked the Minister to clarify

"how many MEPs Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will have after the ratification of the Nice treaty"

and enlargement. He replied:

"That matter has still to be addressed. I am being absolutely frank with the hon. Gentleman when I tell him that the reduction from, I think, 87 to 72 MEPs is a long way into the future."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 380.]

That may be the case, but three months have elapsed since then and it appears that the matter has still not been addressed. That is not good enough. If the reduction is universally applied, Scotland will have the same number of MEPs or fewer than Luxembourg, which has a population similar in size to that of Edinburgh. Scotland has a six-party parliamentary system, so democratic balance will not be served. Wales will have fewer MEPs than Malta, which has a population about the same size as that of Cardiff. Wales has a four-party system and, again, democratic balance will not be served. I was not present when the hon. Member for North Antrim (Rev. Ian Paisley) spoke, but I know that all parties in

*[Angus Robertson]*

Northern Ireland are extremely alarmed at the prospect for cross-community representation should their numbers be reduced.

We were disappointed that Conservative Back Benchers and Government and Tory whips made no effort to allow time for our amendment to deal with that anomaly to be debated or voted on in Committee. If we face a reduction in Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish MEPs, the point will have been made with great clarity that once again the big UK parties acted against the interests of our countries.

I want the Minister to address that concern and would welcome an intervention by Labour MPs who represent Scottish or Welsh constituencies. I see that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Luke) has just left the Chamber. I think that he hopes to speak and I will welcome his contribution. Unfortunately, the sole Conservative Member who represents a Scottish constituency has not attended the debate. [HON. MEMBERS: *"Yes, he has."*] *If he returns to the Chamber perhaps he* will say whether the Conservatives agree that Scotland and Wales deserve to have their levels of representation in the European Parliament reduced. Should Scotland and Wales be directly represented, that difficulty would be academic because our representation would increase to 13 and seven respectively.

The Nice treaty gives rise to other problematic issues if viewed from a Scottish and Welsh perspective. They were presented during the negotiations in Nice and vetoed by the UK Government, so they are not part of the treaty. That has created an ironic situation. The Labour and Liberal Democrat Executive in the Scottish Parliament have endorsed the policy that there should be direct Scottish representation in the European Court of Justice, but the British Government vetoed that. Again, I should like to know whether our Welsh and especially our Scottish colleagues support the UK Government's policy, which does not favour increasing Scottish direct representation, or whether they support our colleagues in Edinburgh who do.

It is useful to raise the problematic issues that arose when the Nice treaty was negotiated because it allows hon. Members from outside Scotland and Wales to be aware of the difficulty that we face because of the lack of representation in the UK. When the treaty was negotiated, Scottish Executive Ministers had attended only 9 per cent. of the meetings held by the Council of Ministers. *[Interruption.]* I hear a Labour Member say, "Shame." I agree entirely. It is disgraceful that they do not take seriously their important role of representing our interests in Europe, although some hon. Members might rightly say that representation at the Council of Ministers is not the most important consideration because many decisions are made beforehand in working groups at an EU level.

Interestingly, Scottish Executive civil servants attended only 75 of about 4,500 working group meetings—an attendance record of a paltry 1.6 per cent. When the Nice treaty was negotiated, Scotland's Europe Minister, Jack McConnell, had never attended a Council meeting. The Scottish Justice Minister, the Liberal Democrat Jim Wallace, had attended only one and had missed the previous seven. There is absolutely no excuse for that.

The difficulties in the negotiations and the unsatisfactory results in many cases show that the current intergovernmental method of treaty reform cannot tackle the challenges that the EU faces. The European Council was well aware of the shortcomings of its decisions and decided therefore to annex to the treaty a declaration describing the steps for the next reform of the EU. The Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru, as part of the Green-European Free Alliance group in the European Parliament, believe that the declaration is ambiguous and postpones for many years—at least until 2004—the deadline for a decision on which direction the EU should take. Furthermore, member states' Governments intend to decide about the next reform of the EU with the usual inefficient and undemocratic method that failed at Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice—namely, an intergovernmental conference, which would happen in 2004.

In the declaration there are also aspects that can prepare the way for a decisive change of direction for European integration, away from a mere diplomatic negotiation towards a process open to the participation of member state and sub-state Parliaments, the European Parliament, the Commission and civil society. Building on an inclusive bottom-up democratic process from now to 2004 could also offer a vital opportunity to define new priorities facing the EU.

Having listed many shortcomings, I return to the key principles with which I started. Is it right that this Bill should be passed to allow enlargement to go forward? The Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru clearly believe that that should be the case; that is why we will be voting with the Government. The second and equally important reason for our support for the Bill is that it does not preclude Scotland and Wales from moving to the normal status of being independent member states of the European Union.

8.41 pm

**Mr. John Smith** (Vale of Glamorgan): I welcome the opportunity to speak, albeit briefly, in this important debate. I speak in support of the treaty and of endorsing it as quickly as we can.

I found today's debate entertaining, especially the speeches made by Opposition Members. If today is an example of the way in which Conservative Members have put the European issue behind them since the election, well, it is great stuff, and all power to their elbow. Keep it up lads and lasses, because we absolutely love it.

Some of the Opposition's arguments have been bizarre. I want to focus on just one of them—the ludicrous propositions they have made on defence. The idea that the Nice treaty will somehow undermine NATO and be the basis for the creation of a European standing army is absolute bunkum, and anyone with a scintilla of intelligence should realise that.

As a member of the North Atlantic Assembly for the past four and a half years, I have not heard a single voice among parliamentarians who represent the political spectrum from right to left within Europe, the United States and Canada against the development of a foreign and security policy in Europe as set out in the treaty or the related development of a European security and defence policy.

The only people who have opposed those ideas are Conservative Members and a few of their cronies—their more oddball cronies—in the United States Congress.

I have met a couple of those cronies, and part of their problem is that they have been briefed by one or two of the oddballs among Conservative Members, one of whom now stands as the Leader of the Opposition. He addressed the United States Congress-Senate defence committee on two occasions and presented his view of future European defence policy. We nearly fell off our chairs when Senator Gordon Smith told us in a briefing that the proposed European security and defence policy, combined with the European single currency, is a plot to create a socialist federation of Europe. Some of us thought, "If only." Such is the standard of debate that we have heard.

The Nice treaty could—I am not saying that it certainly will—help us to meet the real threat to NATO, which is declining capability within NATO member states. Only three of four of the NATO allies in Europe have a NATO capability. Let us be clear about what that means. During Kosovo, despite a standing army throughout the European nations totalling 2 million, it was not possible to muster 30,000 troops to intervene in Kosovo. We had to call on our American allies, who were somewhat reluctant to respond—and with good reason: what reason did they have to deliver for us? That, more than anything else, undermines the future of NATO.

Through the treaty and the related policy of developing a rapid reaction force for Petersberg missions, which range from humanitarian aid to peacekeeping, we could achieve an intensive military capability with a core strength of 60,000 troops—which entails readiness of up to 200,000 troops throughout Europe—who could be used at any time for NATO operations and as NATO assets. If we can achieve that, I will welcome it, because it may—I repeat, I am not saying that it definitely will—address the worrying lack of capability within NATO.

**Mr. Paul Keetch** (Hereford): The hon. Gentleman studies defence issues closely. Is not one of the reasons why the United States supports the creation of the European rapid reaction corps the fact that it perceives that it has been pulled in from time to time to sort out Europe's problems? If we had had a force that could have dealt with Kosovo unaided, there would have been no urgent need for America to become involved. Is that not the real reason why the Americans support the development so much, and why the Conservative party objects to it so strongly?

**Mr. Smith:** It is certainly one of the reasons. Not a single voice within the United States Administration has raised a serious objection to the proposal. They see the potential benefits.

A cursory glance at defence expenditure in European allied countries reveals real-terms cuts of 50 per cent. and more since the end of the cold war, but the true position is worse than that. It is not only the cuts that we inherited four years ago from the Conservative Government that took away our NATO commitment capability, but the fact that money is spent badly. It is not used for a rapid reaction force, heavy-lift capability, or second-line logistics that keep a force in the field for a long time at distance; instead, money continues to be spent on old cold war defence strategies within Europe—to meet the threat of a Soviet or Russian invasion from the east, which is a nonsense.

The forces behind such spending persist in some countries. It is imperative that we find ways and means to change the political will in those countries so that they increase defence expenditure, enabling them to make a NATO commitment, or—at the very least—so that they improve the way in which they spend their defence resources. That is the bottom line—that is what has to be achieved if NATO is to continue to be the best military alliance in human history.

I remain deeply concerned after the horrendous events of 11 September. About 6,000 people died, but we must bear it in mind that more than 50,000 people were targeted and that had it not been for the bravery of a few and some luck, the devastation would have been far greater. The day after, or perhaps the day after that, Lord Robertson was prepared to invoke article 5 of the NATO treaty, and the Americans took up the offer. However, NATO's military contribution is just six airborne warning and control system aircraft that will fly to the United States to protect its territory while it releases forces to go into Afghanistan. That is worrying. The truth is that NATO could not have responded to the attack on America had it taken place on allied soil; it could not have delivered. It was only because of American capability and the leadership of our Prime Minister that we have been able to put together an effective coalition.

Had a similar attack, or perhaps a biological attack targeting 100,000 people, been made in Madrid, Rome or Berlin, I am worried that NATO would not have been able to invoke article 5. Even if it did, I do not think that it could deliver the military punch to back it up, which is why we should support the Bill.

8.51 pm

**Chris Grayling** (Epsom and Ewell): I apologise to the House for missing the first part of the debate; I was attending a Select Committee meeting.

As I have listened to tonight's contributions, I have been mindful of a conversation that I had perhaps 10 years ago in a restaurant in Dresden in eastern Germany with a group of German politicians about the future direction of the European Union. When I questioned the pace of change in the EU, they reacted by saying, "It's going to happen anyway. You've got to be part of it; just get behind us." That process of taking just another step on the road is perhaps the most worrying aspect of the trend towards European integration. I am looking in vain for a clear end point, and I urge the Minister to address the question from this country's perspective. What are we working towards? With what are we integrating? Like colleagues from my previous employment who know senior figures in the European Commission well, I believe that the Commission itself recognises that there is no clearly defined end point to the process of integration that we are going through.

The treaty represents just another step on the way to that ill-defined end point. What are we creating? Is it a common market, an economic union, a political union or the united states of Europe? One gets different perspectives from different countries and different politicians. This country does not have a clear sense of where it is going in western Europe; it is profoundly worrying that we are apparently walking blindly, taking another step towards integration and the unification of Europe without quite knowing where the end point will be.

*[Chris Grayling]*

I am also concerned about democratic accountability and the treaty. It clearly sets out a framework in which, it says, the political parties of western Europe should operate. It states:

"It is proposed that political parties which do not respect democratic principles and fundamental rights may be the subject of suspension proceedings".

Against that background, how do we take the views expressed about the vote in Ireland? Is that vote a veto? Does the fact that one part of the EU has democratically said "no" mean that the treaty cannot go ahead? It clearly should. However, it appears that the attitude of the rest of Europe is, "Well, it's a small country; it doesn't matter. Everyone else will ratify the treaty, so we can go ahead anyway."

I ask Members to look into the future, when another treaty is under consideration. Instead of Ireland being the small country that does not want the treaty, suppose that it is the United Kingdom. Will we have the right to step aside from a treaty in future, or will we be told, "You are just one country among many and you have to accept it"? If it is the latter, I fear for the future of our nation.

We must also consider the financial support in the treaty for political groupings in Europe. The financial structures that require that financial support should be given only to organisations that have a grouping across five member nations immediately discriminate financially against national politics, as opposed to pan-European politics. Can that be right? Does that not represent a further unnecessary erosion of national sovereignty?

The treaty represents a further extension of qualified majority voting, under which, for example, European legislation on worker consultation can be forced through against the wishes of the British Government, businesses and community. It will affect companies with only 20 employees, which is nonsense. Yet again, under QMV we have no choice. Why is it necessary for decisions to be taken in Brussels about whether a small business in the UK should consult all its workers? I made a similar point in my intervention on the speech of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Bryant). Why should such decisions be supranational? Why cannot they be taken in the United Kingdom?

Finally, there is the military dimension. The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) argued strongly that that is an irrelevance. I do not agree. It would be foolhardy in the extreme for this country to subsume its foreign policy and its defence policy into a common European framework.

**Mr. John Smith:** I must come back on that. Far from arguing that the defence issue was an irrelevance, I was arguing that it was vital.

**Chris Grayling:** The hon. Gentleman's point was that the Opposition were wrong in their view that it is essential to preserve Britain's national sovereignty in defence and foreign policy. He suggested that we should not see the formation of a European defence force as undermining NATO and undermining our ability to function in the international community as we have done for 50 years.

At this moment of all times, we have the clearest possible demonstration of why it is fundamental that Britain remains a sovereign nation, as we deploy our defences and take foreign policy decisions. We could not offer to the United States the level of unqualified diplomatic and military support that we have done in recent weeks if we had to take decisions about our foreign policy and our defence by committee across Europe.

I have always counted myself a firm pro-European, but in the past 10 or 15 years Europe has moved on, rather than I. [HON. MEMBERS: "Quite."] I am still pro-European, but I am not in favour of the creation of a European megalith. Step by step, as we move from treaty to treaty, the process of integration develops, we hand over more sovereignty to an international pool, and decisions that should be taken in this country are taken at European level.

The pooling of European sovereignty belies the fact that if recent history teaches us one lesson, it is that nationalism in Europe is not dead and that the spirit of sovereign nations is not dead. If we subsume ourselves into a European superstate and continue to yield sovereignty in treaty after treaty, we will live to regret it. The Bill represents a treaty too far and should be opposed by the House.

8.59 pm

**Mr. David Miliband** (South Shields): Many speakers have promised to be brief and have then spoken for 25 minutes, so I promise not to be brief.

The perspective that I want to introduce to the debate is that of a convinced but frustrated pro-European—a European who believes that daily the case for Europe grows stronger, but also a European who believes that we have much work to do to bridge the gap between the potential of the European Union and its current performance. I do not believe that the EU is broken down—a view shared by both maximalists and sceptics. The EU is a child of post-war reconstruction adapting to the modern world. It is a dynamic process, not a static one. My case is not that the Bill somehow ends all my frustrations with the EU or solves all its problems, but that it sorts out some thorny questions that could block progress on the big issues if they are not dealt with.

I have considered carefully the arguments advanced by the Opposition on Second Reading and have listened to the debate today. I want to go through some of the arguments that they have put forward.

**Mr. Keetch:** The Conservatives.

**Mr. Miliband:** I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon; I wish to speak about the arguments advanced by the Conservatives today.

First, the Conservatives have argued that the extension of qualified majority voting is somehow contrary to the national interest. The hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) said that he was against the extension of QMV in principle. But the best argument put forward by the Conservatives is that we have been outvoted on the issue of droit de suite. What are the facts about QMV, however? According to the figures that I have, in respect of the hundreds of decisions taken under QMV in 1998, we were outvoted only twice—on fewer occasions than France, Italy and Germany. In 1999, we were not outvoted at all.

Thanks to QMV, we have been able to secure the e-commerce directive and to liberalise some agricultural trade. We have even been able to override the proposal to

label British chocolate as vegelate. So, QMV has its uses. I cannot agree with the hon. Member for West Suffolk that we should be against it in principle. Outside areas that are central to national sovereignty—tax, defence and so on—QMV not only makes sense, but can operate in British interests. After all, that is why the Government extended it in the 1980s. We will not win all the arguments, but enough of them to make it worth while.

Secondly, the Conservatives have argued that integration would put off east European applicant states, but there is absolutely no evidence to support that view. Those states will be much more reluctant to join a sclerotic EU that cannot work than one that can function efficiently. Thirdly, we have seen a lot of crocodile tears today about the common agricultural policy, but surely this is the greatest Aunt Sally of them all. Treaty reform is not needed to amend the CAP. As was argued earlier, the 1999 financial perspective started the process, and it will be continued. The truth of the argument about the CAP is that enlargement will force the pace of CAP reform, rather than such reform paving the way to enlargement.

I shall not speak in detail about the fourth complaint that has been made about the Bill. It was made on Second Reading by the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash), about whose views I shall speak again later. He claimed that the Bill was a German plot. I do not think that that argument can be taken seriously, especially when one considers the facts. At the Nice summit, Chancellor Schröder put aside the opportunity to argue for greater voting weight for his country than for France in the Council of Ministers. He put aside his national interest in favour of the European one. That is the sort of grown-up politics of which we need to see more, because I think that the UK has something distinctive to offer to the development of the EU.

During the past three months, I have been participating in a group chaired by the Belgian Prime Minister. I shall continue to do so until December. The group is considering the debate on the future of Europe and how it should be structured in the run-up to the intergovernmental conference of 2004. I am delighted to say that Prime Minister Verhofstadt is coming to South Shields next week to test the waters on European issues and find out about local public opinion on some of the matters that we are discussing.

In the run-up to 2004, my belief is that the debate about institutions has to start with one about substance and policy. The task for the European Council is to start a process that tackles the delivery deficit as much as the democratic one. What sort of institutional reforms would achieve that aim? Now is not the time for blueprints, but I want to put down a few markers.

First, the IGC has been called partly to give meaning to subsidiarity. Our Prime Minister has proposed a political declaration policed by a second Chamber. Prime Minister Jospin has suggested a standing committee of national parliamentarians, and others have suggested clearer treaty language and sunset clauses in legislation. All those ideas are worthy of discussion. Secondly, the European Council also needs reform. The organisation of the presidency and the establishment of a political guiding hand from each country—a co-ordination council that meets regularly in Brussels—would also add to institutional effectiveness. Thirdly, we need to find a way of propelling forward the open co-ordination method that was developed at Lisbon. I see a key role for the European Commission in that respect. Finally, I think that there is a strong case for expressing clearly the aims, objectives and practices of the European Union in a single treaty. That European constitution could be the clear benchmark for judging the EU's actions. Since there are three years before the IGC, let us also debate whether European citizens and the connection between them and the EU's work might best be served by holding the legislative sessions of the European Council in public so that people can hear the arguments.

As a new hon. Member, I believed that the Conservative leadership election might lead to Front-Bench Members updating their thinking after Second Reading and developing a more pragmatic approach. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stone is not present. On Second Reading, he was a humble Back Bencher who attacked his party for failing to offer an immediate referendum not on the Nice treaty but on "the whole European issue".

Pulling out of Europe is a long-standing passion of the hon. Member for Stone. In 1996, he introduced a Bill that provided for a referendum on withdrawal from the EU. A man should not be judged by his friends, but hon. Members will want to know that co-sponsors included Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Mr. John Townend and, intriguingly, the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith).

Little did I realise when I listened on Second Reading to the plea for a referendum on withdrawal from the EU that the hon. Member for Stone was auditioning for the Conservative Front Bench. He has achieved his aim. The leader of the Conservative party has said that the party should no longer be "monomaniac" about Europe. Yet he has promoted to the position of shadow Attorney-General—a post that includes a special remit to examine European policy—a man of whom the former Prime Minister, John Major, said:

> "Bill Cash is . . . obsessive, driven, and, on Europe, frankly a bore. Discussing Europe with Bill is like spending an afternoon with the Ancient Mariner."

The Conservative party may claim that its dogmatic days are behind it, but there is no clearer sign of its extremism than the fact that the keeper of the anti-European faith is now the keeper of its European policy.

I do not believe that the Bill is great or historic, but it is necessary. A united Europe, not only in the negative sense of living peacefully together, but positively, as a force for good in our own countries and in the wider world, is more necessary than ever. The Bill helps to make that possible, and I support it on that basis.

9.7 pm

**Angela Watkinson** (Upminster): I hope the fact that my paternal grandmother was Welsh would satisfy the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell), if he were here, of my European credentials.

The Nice treaty is a crucial step in the development of our relationship with Europe. Although enlargement is only a small element of the Bill, it is welcome. Most applicant countries have large tracts of agricultural land; for example, Poland, which has been mentioned several times this evening. The common agricultural policy

*[Angela Watkinson]*

cannot possibly be sustained as it currently operates. That reform should have been tackled first to enable enlargement to progress readily.

It is unfortunate that the treaty is a package deal, which includes the European rapid reaction force. Despite assurances, I continue to have reservations that NATO would be weakened by it. It also covers qualified majority voting, which I shall consider later.

Europe is our nearest neighbour, and we should be on the best possible terms. There are countless ways in which we can co-operate—environmental issues, trade, tourism and international crime are obvious topics on which to do that. The current crisis of international terrorism is an opportunity for Europe to demonstrate whether it can act and speak as a single entity with support from all its members. However, we must respect the differences of member countries, which have widely varied economies, cultures and needs.

The differences will be even wider if the treaty is ratified this evening. It will lock them together by increased qualified voting into policies of one size fits all. They may benefit some countries, have a neutral effect on some and disadvantage others. In that way, the loss of control over our own domestic decisions—in which I include how much we spend on our public services, and on local government finance—could lead to policies agreed on the basis of qualified majority voting being imposed on this country when we had voted against them. That would constitute a fundamental erosion of democracy.

The electorate have the right to expect that representatives for whom they have voted in an election, and could subsequently vote out of office if not satisfied, will formulate the policies that govern their lives. Nice is a further step towards a inward-looking, protectionist, over-regulated, centralised Europe—that politically bound federal European state that is the openly acknowledged aim of France, Germany, Italy and other members.

Nice would take us in the wrong direction. The future of Europe should be what Charles de Gaulle described as a "Europe des patries"—a flexible group of co-operating but independent self-governing nations. It should focus on clear, overriding issues that transcend national boundaries, with which national Parliaments cannot or do not wish to deal effectively. If the nation state is not able to regulate an area completely or exclusively, electorates will have nothing to lose and everything to gain from international co-operation.

The question before us tonight, however, is "Who governs Britain?" Europe is our friend, neighbour and trading partner, but we do not need to give up the independence of our Government to prove it—and that would be the effect of our ratifying the Nice treaty tonight. It is a step too far, and I shall vote against it.

9.11 pm

**Mr. Iain Luke** (Dundee, East): I am glad to be able to make this late contribution to the debate.

I hope very much that all of us who believe that Britain's future lies within the European Union will be willing to put the case for continuing constructive participation in the shaping of our joint European future, and for the enlargement of the European Union. We also need to expose the paucity of credible arguments advanced by the Conservative party in opposition to the Government's case.

As one who grew to maturity as a close observer of the positive and peaceful development of the European Union, first visiting Spain and Portugal when they were in the firm grip of ageing fascist military dictators, I believe that the case for Europe and what it has achieved in the last 50 years must be constantly reiterated.

No democracy or other organisation can be described as perfect. Indeed, the House of Commons may be a case in point. One of the major recurring themes of civil society has been the efforts of citizens to ensure that the political constitutions by which their lives are directed, regulated and controlled are structured to allow balance, redress and a share of responsibilities between rulers and ruled. In the context of the European dimension, the path to this treaty cannot be seen as a pursuit of political perfection; it must be seen as meeting the need to accommodate the national interests and aspirations of the member states of the European Union. The treaty is just another step on that road.

The Conservative party's opposition to this parliamentary process of ratification is a spectacle both ironic and distressing. It is ironic in that all the major steps along the road so far have been initiated by the major Opposition party, as a party in government. The accession treaty represented the high point of Edward Heath's premiership, indeed of his whole political career. Mrs. Thatcher willingly agreed to the Single European Act, although it is rumoured that she later had regrets. The Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties were bravely and successfully piloted by John Major, in the face of the rebellious opposition of a then new Member—now the new leader of the Conservative party.

As I have said, what we have heard from the major Opposition party tonight—as in earlier debates—is both ironic and depressing. We see the remains of a once great party, now in the process of rejecting the European ideal so eloquently proposed by Winston Churchill in the aftermath of the second world war when he argued for a united states of Europe. Now, in contrast, for the first time we have a Conservative leader and a Conservative party not just rejecting the European ideal, but actively and seriously believing that we should remove ourselves from the mainstream of European decision making and political life.

Conservative Members have trumpeted in this debate that the treaty of Nice represents a further significant loss of British sovereignty and is a serious attack on what they regard as the British way of life. What rubbish. I do not subscribe to the view that the closer we come to our fellow EU members and the closer we work with them, the less British we become. Indeed, in response to some of the comments made earlier, I ask a question from a specifically Scottish perspective. Has 300 years of membership of the United Kingdom made the Scots less Scottish? The answer is no. I believe that as a nation we Scots have played, and continue to play, a full and active part, in the Union while keeping a distinctive cultural context.

**Angus Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Luke:** I have to press on, as other hon. Members wish to speak.

**Angus Robertson:** Go on.

**Mr. Luke:** Other hon. Members wish to speak and I hope to get through my speech as quickly as possible. I shall give the hon. Gentleman the chance to raise the issue with me outside the Chamber.

Both the Government and the Opposition Front-Bench membership contain a fair smattering of Scots making their mark. Some of them come from an elevated position, whereas others come from a less-elevated one.

Will this treaty or the euro have any effect on the essential nature of the English or indeed of the United Kingdom dimension? Does EU membership make the Germans less German or the French less French? Does membership make them less likely to promote their national prosperity and jobs? The answer is no. Individual citizens are more concerned about jobs, prosperity and well-being. Ultimately, qualified majority voting has had little impact on those people's daily lives and consciousness.

Therefore, putting all the humbug to one side, one should view the Bill's proposals as they really are. The proposals are very positive, modest and useful improvements to the way in which the European Union operates, paving the way to enlargement. An enlarged European Union will in turn provide a larger market for British goods and bring greater prosperity to new and current member states and to our constituents.

**Angus Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Luke:** I really have to press on so that other hon. Members can speak.

The arguments in support of the United Kingdom's continued active involvement in the affairs of the European Union also are true of Scotland's continued membership of the United Kingdom. The case for an independent Scotland in Europe made by the Scottish National party has been rejected several times. That case, just like the one made today by Conservative Members, runs contrary to the economic, political, social and cultural realities that we face as a country and as parliamentarians. It is a recipe for job losses, unfulfilled potential and an introverted obsession with the past and its redundant jingoism.

I firmly believe that the best possible deal for Britain will be achieved by staying on the inside track rather than by crashing along the hard shoulder with an eye on a possible early exit from the European Union.

Last year, in his final speech to the Labour party conference, just before his sad death, Donald Dewar made the point that he was proud of being a Scot, a Briton and a European. For me, those sentiments set the framework in which I shall serve as a Member of Parliament, to achieve the best possible deal for my country and my constituents.

9.18 pm

**Mr. John Baron** (Billericay): There can be little doubt that this treaty is mainly about political and economic integration and not about enlargement. If hon. Members need proof of that, they have only to look at the circumstances surrounding the Irish referendum. As we all know, before that referendum, it was widely claimed by Commissioners, Members of the European Parliament and European Union members themselves that ratification of the treaty was an essential precondition for enlargement of the European Union. However, when the Irish voted no, the EU itself changed its tune. Romano Prodi, President of the Commission, told the *Irish Times:*

"legally it is not necessary . . . enlargement is possible without Nice".

Had the European Union been genuinely preparing itself for enlargement, it would have put the common agricultural policy—is the biggest obstacle to enlargement—on the agenda at Nice, but it was not on the agenda. It is therefore clear that the treaty is not about enlargement, but about further creating a framework to achieve full political and economic union.

By way of illustration, I bring to the attention of the House article 157 of the treaty, which deals with industrial policy, a matter that the treaty commits to co-determination and which was previously subject to a national veto. Article 157 says that the Community and the member states shall ensure that their actions shall be aimed at

"speeding up the adjustment of industry to structural changes . . . encouraging an environment favourable to initiative and to the development of undertakings throughout the Community . . . encouraging an environment favourable to co-operation between undertakings."

Essentially, that article is a charter for industrial meddlers that will cost us dear. Such vague words will provide limitless scope for Governments and the EU to intervene in industry. Now that article 157 is subject to co-determination, that potential will be more easily realised.

The Prime Minister of France, Lionel Jospin, for example, has already called for a "Community industrial policy", and it seems likely that he and the others who advocate such intervention will stand a better chance of achieving their goal, courtesy of article 157. Removing the national veto in that area is likely to be expensive in terms of reduced industrial efficiency and the increased red tape and taxes required to implement any EU economic restructuring that the article will now permit.

History has shown time and again the dynamic relationship between low taxes and prosperity. Governments stand a far better chance of creating wealth for the benefit of all their citizens if they stand back and allow businesses to breathe and thrive, not smother them with bureaucracy, red tape and taxes. However, article 157 will open the door and encourage those who argue that we should have a Community industrial policy. Such an approach can only stifle enterprise and prosperity in the long term.

Despite the Prime Minister's claims to the contrary, the treaty will take Europe closer to political and economic integration, as illustrated by article 157. It is interesting to note that other EU leaders have at least been honest enough to acknowledge that fact. Indeed, Joschka Fischer, Germany's Foreign Minister, has said that Nice

"paves the way"

for

"the deepening of the Union",

and

"goes well beyond the treaty of Amsterdam".

The Conservatives' approach to the EU is one of friendly co-operation, not centralisation. The treaty is about not enlargement but further integration. For that reason, I oppose its ratification.

9.22 pm

**Ms Meg Munn** (Sheffield, Heeley): I support the Bill because of the benefits that my constituents have had from the European Union and the further benefits that they will gain from an enlarged Union. My area of Sheffield in south Yorkshire currently receives objective 1 help of some £711 million to help it recover from some of the devastation caused in the 18 years of Conservative government.

The area also benefits from the jobs that arise from exports to the EU. Some 315,000 jobs are thought to depend on our ability to export to the EU, and some 63 per cent. of goods exported from Yorkshire and Humberside go to the EU. What other benefits might there be for areas such as ours? My hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Jon Trickett) described the problems caused by the differing benefits that accrue to areas in Britain through membership of the EU.

Membership of an enlarged EU is important not only for large companies but for small and medium-sized enterprises. Some 30 per cent. of Yorkshire and Humberside SMEs have trading links with other EU states and that would continue and expand with an enlarged EU. Inward investment is also important; over the past 10 years it has brought some £11 billion to the region.

We have also heard people talk disparagingly about EU social legislation. That surprises me, because health and safety at work are extremely important. In my brief time as an MP, two casework issues have arisen in which we have looked to the European regulations. One concerns asbestos and a constituent of mine who unfortunately died from related diseases. With his widow, I have been looking at how European regulations might be of benefit.

The second matter is the issue of the working time directive, which some Opposition Members have so disparaged this afternoon. On Monday, some bus drivers from my constituency came to lobby me. They believe that the fact that they are not subject to the working time directive means that they drive for more hours than they should. They think that that is dangerous, and that passengers are put at risk. They sorely need to be covered by the directive.

I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Mr. Miliband), who said that things have not changed since the Conservative party elected its new leader. I detected a puzzling change emerging in this debate, in that the shadow Foreign Secretary at the start of the debate raised issues that were different from those raised at earlier stages of the Bill's progress through the House. What was that about? Do the Opposition want enlargement, but not in the way set out in the treaty? Do they want a positive vision of Europe? I wondered whether the Opposition were developing a new slogan—"In Europe, but not of Europe"—and I am considerably puzzled.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield): Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Ms Munn:** No, I am very short of time.

**Michael Fabricant:** Oh, come on.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal):** Order. The hon. Lady has indicated that she is not taking an intervention.

**Ms Munn:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I researched the Conservative position, and discovered that Iain Duncan Smith—I beg your pardon, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am still relatively new to the job and meant to say "the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green"—told a magazine called *Fast Forward* that

"Britain should promote a wider, more flexible European Union."

We have heard that argument today, but I am puzzled because the Conservative position on Europe would more appropriately be called "rewind". Certainly, that is the button on the video machine that I would press if I were looking at Europe from the Conservative viewpoint.

We have also heard that the treaty is not about enlargement. As a new Member, I am still finding my way around. I have been told that the House of Commons Library is first rate, and that it is the place to find out about anything. I picked up a document there entitled "The Treaty of Nice and the Future of Europe Debate", which I was sure would be useful. It states:

"Formulas were agreed for the main institutional issues outstanding from the last IGC in 1996–97 that gave rise to the Treaty of Amsterdam (size of the Commission, weighting of votes in the Council and extension of Qualified Majority Voting), and amendments to a range of other Treaty Articles were also decided. The new Treaty aims to prepare the Union to expand to 27 members."

I am therefore left in a dilemma: do I believe the House of Commons Library, or Conservative Members?

There may be problems with enlargement, and some hon. Members have identified them, but I believe that its effect will be positive overall. It will give Britain, as a leading country in the EU, a stronger role in the world. We have heard in the debate already how we have benefited from that status in connection with the terrorism that the world is having to face at present.

Successful enlargement will create new opportunities for Britain. I am convinced that it will benefit my constituents, and the people of Britain as a whole.

9.29 pm

**Mr. Richard Spring** (West Suffolk): I congratulate all right hon. and hon. Members who have participated in the debate. We have had a lively but good humoured debate, with a range of opinions expressed.

Only last month the Minister for Europe made a speech in Strasbourg, much of which I entirely agreed with. Speech making twice in a day is clearly becoming the right hon. Gentleman's forte. He said how much he welcomed the need

"to explain clearly and simply the issues we face in today's EU, without resort to Eurobabble. We need to reconnect Europe with its citizens, particularly the citizens of the future, both here and abroad."

The same point was made so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling). Yet the Government, by signing up to Nice, are doing precisely the reverse. Far from reconnecting Europe's citizens with EU institutions, the treaty has provoked yet more disappointment, disillusion and disconnection with the European Union, and not only in Ireland—a point made so tellingly by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning).

In the right hon. Gentleman's speeches, and in a major speech by the Foreign Secretary on 27 July, constant reference was made to the fact that the EU exists for its

citizens and not for the political elite. The trouble is that it is like a doctor diagnosing the problems of a patient and then declining to prescribe the medicine that would cure the problem.

Europe is at a crossroads. The necessary and wholly desirable enlargement of the Union provides an extraordinary opportunity to build a modern, outward-looking and flexible Europe that will endure and be acceptable to its citizens. That point was made very effectively by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Angela Watkinson).

Much of what the Government agreed at Nice, despite all the rhetoric, achieved exactly the reverse. An opportunity was clearly and tragically missed. It was a catalogue of bad preparation, backtracking and incompetence on a grand scale which sped on the process of political integration and further alienated people from the Union.

Let us examine some of the misjudgments and mistakes that the Government made at Nice. Before Nice, the former—and late lamented—Foreign Secretary talked to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs about the 50 items on the French presidency's list of potential extensions to qualified majority voting. He substantially ruled them out. So what happened in practice? Our Government accepted the majority of the items on that list in one form or another, wholly or in part. This is the same Foreign Secretary who told us that the so-called Amsterdam treaty leftovers probably did not require a new formal treaty to pave the way for enlargement. Indeed, a simpler treaty of accession arrangement would have sufficed.

On QMV, however, the Government cannot have it both ways. They say that these items are unimportant or technical and ask what the fuss is about. In the next breath, they say that those items are vital for the functioning of the Union. They cannot have it both ways. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) was right to say that the importance of a number of the issues dealing with QMV cannot be overlooked.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) was quite right about the devastating effect of the levy on the resale of works of art. I agree entirely with him about the devastating effect that it will have on the London art market. I also agree that the Prime Minister's speech at Lisbon about economic reform has rapidly run into the sands.

The reason the Government postured—as they did in advance on QMV and then gave in—is because they have no view and no vision of what an enlarged European Union should look like. A lively and legitimate debate is taking place across Europe about what the architecture of the EU should be. Only our Government have thus far declined to participate in any meaningful way. Their only specific recommendation to bridge the democratic-deficit divide was the Prime Minister's ill conceived call for a second Chamber of the European Parliament—inspired, no doubt, by his brilliant reforms of the House of Lords.

**Ms Stuart:** On divisions about QMV, I am delighted that the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) is on the Front Bench. He, of all people, called for an extension of QMV on matters of family law. Can the hon. Member for West Suffolk explain that?

**Mr. Spring:** No such vote was called for by my hon. Friend at the Committee stage, as I think hon. Members will agree—*[Interruption.]* No, it was not voted on.

Before Nice, Ministers repeatedly listed areas where they would refuse to extend QMV: treaty change, taxation, border controls, social security, defence and EU own resources. However, Labour's election manifesto mentioned only two items to be retained for the veto—namely, tax and border controls. So are we going to see the continuation of the salami-slicing away of Britain's veto?

As we have heard, the irony of ironies of the whole process is that even the Commission President regards Nice as unessential for incorporating new members. My hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr. Swire) reminded us of the remarks of the President of the Commission in June. It is worth listening to them again. He said:

> "Legally, ratification of the Nice Treaty is not necessary for enlargement. It's without any problem up to 20 members, and those beyond 20 members have only to put in the accession agreement some notes of change, some clause. But legally, it's not necessary. This doesn't mean the Irish referendum is not important. But from this specific point of view, enlargement is possible without Nice."

There we have it from the President.

In more than four years of government, what powers have this Government retrieved for our national Parliament where, at the very least, the law can be changed? The Minister for Europe complained in his Strasbourg speech about the "disconnect" from national Parliaments. We need to involve our national legislatures more closely in shaping and monitoring EU decisions, so why did we not embark on that process at Nice by drawing a line, as we would have done on QMV, and saying, "Let us return powers to national Parliaments"? It was not even mentioned.

The Minister should stop making speeches about "Eurobabble" and the need for plain speaking and should do something about it before the decline in confidence in the European Union's institutions among the peoples of both the member and accession states gets any worse.

We hear about so-called constructive engagement—I must repeat this point—but in four and a half years it has not yielded one power back to our national Parliament. Of course, we are happy to accept the technical changes made in the Council of Ministers and the composition of the European Commission as being necessary for enlargement. We have made that plain all the way through.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) made clear, however, nothing has proved more clearly the need for a continuing American involvement in Europe than the terrible events of 11 September. Ultimately, our American allies will want more defence burden sharing. As one surveys the declining defence expenditure in Europe, one sees that that is going to be something of a challenging aspiration.

One thing that comes through loud and clear, however, is the fact that we in Europe need our American friends to stay committed to our defence and security. We have always been committed as a party to enhanced

*[Mr. Spring]*

pan-European defence co-operation, but under the umbrella of NATO. At Nice, report annexe 1, page 8, stated:

"It remains essential to the credibility and effectiveness of the European security and defence policy that the Union's military capabilities for crisis management be reinforced so that the Union is in a position to intervene with or without recourse to Nato assets."

Speaking of the rapid reaction force, it went on to say:

"the entire chain of command must remain under the political control and strategic direction of the EU throughout the operation . . . the operation commander will report on the conduct of the operation to EU bodies only".

Thank goodness. At least NATO does not operate on the basis of QMV.

The last thing we need now is to go ahead and create a European rapid reaction force that is disconnected from NATO. I hope that the lessons of the past few weeks have made that proposition crystal clear.

The right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) said that the process had moved on as a result of the tragic events of 11 September, and that the importance and centrality of NATO had been increasingly recognised. I very much hope that that is the case, but we have yet to see any concrete proof, or any written document to that effect, and I remind hon. Members that we are dealing with what is in front of us—the Nice treaty—not speculation as to what may have developed after that point, however welcome it may be.

Similarly, my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes warned of the implications of yet more judge-led law in this country, arising from the charter of fundamental rights. By contrast with the previous Minister for Europe, who likened its importance to *The Beano* magazine, no lawyer disregards the importance of the charter. Repeatedly, various politicians in Europe demand that it should be a basis for a written constitution.

What has been said in this regard?

"The Charter will mark a definitive change in the Community which will move it away from the essentially economic raison d'être of its origins to become a full political union"—

thus Commissioner Vitorino. Furthermore, if one wanted proof positive of the force of the charter, the Commission itself observed:

"It can reasonably be expected that the Charter will become mandatory through the Court's interpretation of it as belonging to the general principles of Community law".

Its impact on our country, with its history of common law and practice, and the division between the judiciary and the legislature, would be to transform the centuries-old systems that serve us so well.

It is worth reminding ourselves that originally the European rapid reaction force was flatly rejected by the Prime Minister, and then suddenly his mind was changed. Therefore, when he says that he will not accept a European written constitution, we all know that on the question of European defence he has flip-flopped for reasons of political expediency, and he may well do so again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) said, and I fully agree, that it is an historic obligation on our part to increase the European Union by way of enlargement. Of course we are passionately committed to enlargement. When the Berlin wall came down, it was truly a momentous event. Yet every hon. Member knows that unless we get budgetary reform, enlargement simply cannot happen; and in the Foreign Secretary's speech on 27 July at Chatham house he said:

"We want reform of the Common Agricultural Policy."

Yes indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Djanogly) observed, that is crucial for Poland. So what are the Government actually doing about it? We know President Chirac's views—no reform until 2006. How is enlargement to be funded? How will the agricultural chapters of the accession states be closed successfully? We need some leadership from the Government; otherwise enlargement will be imperilled.

When the Foreign Secretary spoke at Chatham house, he spoke of the need once again to connect with Europe's citizens. He said that Europe should focus more on outcomes and less on process, that the European Union was built on the foundation of its nation states, and that we should be ready to engage in a serious debate about Europe; I agreed with every single word. Yet the Government, by their actions, did precisely the opposite at Nice, unnecessarily giving up our veto, failing to bring back any powers to Westminster and failing to tackle Europe's post-enlargement financing.

The Government talk boldly but have absolutely no clear idea of what a sustainable European institutional architecture should look like. Nice was not, in practice, about enlargement. As we have seen, it may actually slow down and damage enlargement. From the viewpoint of the United Kingdom, it was about our Government who failed to stand up for our national interests and failed to argue for an enduring, flexible, open and democratic European Union, valued and supported by its citizens.

We have three years before the intergovernmental conference, which will examine the competences of the EU and its members. It is a hugely important opportunity to fashion a sustainable European Union. I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife that we are anxious to have a White Paper on the subject, as we examine all these considerations. The Conservatives will want, as a party, to contribute positively to the process, and I hope that the Government will do the same. At Nice, they signed up to a treaty that had precious little to do with enlargement, and I truly hope that the Government will move away from simply talking towards constructive action and firm, clear proposals. Sadly, the Government's failure at Nice gives us precious little hope that that will be the case.

9.44 pm

**Peter Hain:** With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, I shall reply to the debate and support the Third Reading of the Bill.

I applaud the hon. Member for West Suffolk (Mr. Spring) for reading all my speeches, but it does not seem to have done him much good. I confess that I have had withdrawal symptoms in this debate because of the absence from the Back Benches of the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash). I miss seeing him there. I miss his 235 amendments and his championing of qualified majority voting on family law. I also miss the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow), with his convoluted semantics. What has happened to them? They have been sentenced to silence by duty on the Front

Bench. Indeed, we read in the papers that the hon. Member for Stone—a good friend of mine, whom I enormously admire—was told on his appointment to say nothing about Europe, which must be very hard for him.

There is another absent figure—the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke). Where is he? What would he have said? In announcing his candidacy for the Conservative party leadership in June, he said:

"Our official policy at the general election was that Conservatives favoured enlarging the Union but opposed the Treaty of Nice which paves the way for enlargement. We opposed the extension of QMV to any new subject, however trivial. We were hostile to the European rapid reaction force. We demanded that Parliament should be able to overturn judgements of the European Court whenever we disagreed with the Court's rulings on our treaty obligations. These policies are difficult to reconcile with Britain's continued membership of the European Union."

Exactly, and I am a little puzzled about the Conservative party's new stance since its change in leadership.

Where are all the pound signs that Conservative Members used to wear proudly in their lapels when in the Chamber? Has somebody stolen them? Perhaps they have lost them, and the slogan of the new Conservative party leadership is, "We've lost the pound." Perhaps they have given them away, and their new slogan is, "We've given away the pound." Perhaps they have melted them down to form new ones, or perhaps they have scrapped the pound already. We should be told what they have done with their pound signs.

**Mrs. Browning:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Peter Hain:** I gave way to many Opposition Members in my opening speech, much to my regret, and I am pressed for time.

**Michael Fabricant:** The Minister has 12 minutes in which to finish his speech.

**Peter Hain:** Yes, but in 12 minutes I have to reply to a long debate.

We know what the modern Conservative party really thinks about Europe. Lord Skidelsky, who has just quit the Conservative party, said:

"The party I joined was Eurosceptic. It has become Europhobic. And with Europhobia has surfaced a streak of xenophobia."

That is the new Conservative party.

The hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Mrs. Browning) was absolutely apoplectic at the end of her speech when she said that there will be no such thing as a United Kingdom any more—but as my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Luke) said, does she really think that the French are less French by being in the EU, or that the Germans are less German or the Spanish less Spanish? Does she really think that they have less pride, less national identity or less patriotism than we do in Britain? Of course they do not.

The hon. Member for Upminster (Angela Watkinson) asked a rhetorical question in the context of European issues: who governs Britain? Well, the answer is that Labour governs Britain.

The right hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) spent much time talking about the Irish referendum. It is worth recalling that when the Conservatives were in office and he was a Minister and the Danes voted against the Maastricht treaty that the Conservatives introduced to the House, the Tories did not tear up the treaty or withdraw the Bill. On the contrary, the Conservative Government worked assiduously to produce assurances for the Danes that allowed for a second positive referendum in Denmark and for the Maastricht treaty to be ratified unamended. That is what happened under a Conservative Government.

I invite the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues on the Conservative Benches to cut the cant about their position on enlargement. By their vote against the Bill, they are seeking to sabotage enlargement of the EU. The way in which they glory in the result of the Irish referendum is rather distasteful. It is as though they want everyone to vote against the Bill on the Nice treaty and to wreck enlargement as a result.

My hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) and for Hemsworth (Jon Trickett) made valid points about disengagement and disconnection in the modern EU. To his credit, the hon. Member for West Suffolk made those points as well. The Government and the whole House—pro-Europeans especially—need to pay heed to the result of the Irish referendum and, particularly, to the central slogan of the "No" campaign, which was, "If you don't know, vote no." That imposes a special obligation on the EU's leadership to come up with reforms and new ways of working to close the gap between the leaders and the led, which is far too wide at present.

I commend the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) on the elegance, eloquence and logic of his case in support of the Bill and enlargement of the EU. In joining us in the Aye Lobby, he will put the reunification of Europe above his party obligations. I commend him on that.

I welcome the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) and for Wimbledon (Roger Casale). I endorse the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet (Dr. Ladyman) in his excellent speech. He pointed out that, in becoming involved in the EU, we are not giving up our sovereignty, but pooling it to make us stronger in the way that we do as members of NATO, the Security Council of the United Nations and other international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund.

In another excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Bryant) made it absolutely clear that the issue is not the US versus Europe. Indeed, the transatlantic alliance between the US and Britain has been especially important over the past month. It needs to strengthen.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East and Washington, West (Joyce Quin) made an important point about the battle against terrorism that has followed the awful events of 11 September. She pointed out that, if we did not have in place EU structures such as the Justice and Home Affairs Council and the EU's other mechanisms to take on the threat of terrorism, we would find it much more difficult to confront and beat that threat.

In an excellent tour de force, my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) described as absolutely ludicrous Conservative arguments on European security and defence policy. He tore them apart.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Mr. Miliband) made an important argument about the common agricultural policy, which answered the point

*[Peter Hain]*

raised by the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton. He said that enlargement will force reform of the CAP, because the current policy—which desperately needs reform in any case—will not be sustainable after enlargement. However, we must not block enlargement by seeking to make CAP reform a condition of it. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Ms Munn) explained how important enlargement will be for businesses, especially small businesses, in her constituency. That is an important case for it.

Enlargement represents an historic opportunity to end the cold war division of Europe and reunite our continent. A bigger EU will be stronger and safer. Today we can only fight terrorism, crime, drugs and pollution through joint action across the continent. The Nice treaty is essential to open the door to enlargement, the goal of successive British Governments. It removes all remaining institutional obstacles.

The Nice treaty has met its primary objective, but it has also advanced other key British interests. Our first priority was to get more voting strength for the UK, and we got it. The treaty increases the relative weight of Britain's vote in the Council of Ministers for the first time. Who could disagree with that? Perhaps only a party that does not care about our weight inside the EU because most of its members want to be outside it.

I am pleased that the leader of the Conservative party has joined us. Perhaps he can explain how he put his name to a 1996 Bill sponsored by the hon. Member for Stone, which called for withdrawal from the EU. Why does he not explain his position? I see that the pound signs have suddenly reappeared, but the real agenda under his leadership is withdrawal from the EU.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Denzil Davies) raised a series of questions about qualified majority voting. In the treaty negotiations we retained unanimity where it was necessary and extended QMV when it was in Britain's interests. The Opposition should have no difficulty with that. They agreed to move from unanimity to QMV and gave away the veto, as they now call it, in the Single European Act under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher and in the Maastricht treaty under John Major. They did that on some fundamental articles, including the general single market legislation and on almost all environment provisions.

As the Opposition are not against QMV in principle, why do they oppose it in the Nice treaty on such measures as the appointment of EU special representatives on foreign policy? Unanimity could clearly hold up important work that those envoys do or allow one member state to hold out against the best candidate for the job. Why do they hold out against QMV for the salary and pension of the Registrar of the Court of First Instance? Where is the earth-shattering national importance—the threat to our sovereignty—of the British veto on that issue? Would the Opposition really have the British people trooping off to the polls for a referendum on that vital constitutional issue, but not for the euro?

QMV will make it easier to introduce changes to the rules of procedure of the European Court of Justice to improve efficiency so that justice will no longer be delayed or denied to British companies seeking redress. The Opposition used to be the party of business—but no longer apparently. They opposed QMV on financial regulations on probity, which will be introduced by the treaty. It will now be easier to carry out reforms to tighten up financial management, which I thought concerned the Conservatives.

Once again, I welcome the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) to the Front Bench. People constantly say to me that we should give him time and more credit for his appointment as leader of his party. I am a generous man, but how can we give him credit when he has given us Cash? The answer is because he is leading an anti-European crusade with a Front Bench—there they are, grinning away—full of anti-Europeans and Eurosceptics who want to take us out of Europe.

The Opposition do not want European enlargement or the advantages of having peace, prosperity, stability and jobs. They do not want to benefit from protection of the environment, food safety measures or streets that are made safer from the danger of drugs. They do not want protection from the threat of terrorism, which will be repelled much more effectively by an enlarged EU that brings in all the candidate states to join us in our fight against terrorism. The Opposition argue against that—

*Question put,* That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 392, Noes 158.

**Division No. 38]** **[10 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley N)*
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Bob *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Douglas
Allan, Richard
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Rt Hon Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Janet *(Rossendale)*
Armstrong, Rt Hon Ms Hilary
Atherton, Ms Candy
Atkins, Charlotte
Austin, John
Bailey, Adrian
Baker, Norman
Banks, Tony
Barnes, Harry
Barrett, John
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beard, Nigel
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Begg, Miss Anne
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Hilary
Bennett, Andrew
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Best, Harold
Betts, Clive
Blackman, Liz
Blears, Ms Hazel
Blizzard, Bob
Borrow, David
Bradley, Rt Hon Keith *(Withington)*
Bradley, Peter *(The Wrekin)*
Brake, Tom
Breed, Colin
Brennan, Kevin
Brooke, Annette
Brown, Rt Hon Nicholas *(Newcastle E & Wallsend)*
Brown, Russell *(Dumfries)*
Browne, Desmond
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Colin
Burnham, Andy
Byers, Rt Hon Stephen
Cable, Dr Vincent
Caborn, Rt Hon Richard
Cairns, David
Calton, Mrs Patsy
Campbell, Alan *(Tynemouth)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Rt Hon Menzies *(NE Fife)*
Carmichael, Alistair
Casale, Roger
Caton, Martin
Cawsey, Ian
Challen, Colin
Chapman, Ben *(Wirral S)*
Chaytor, David
Chidgey, David
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Mrs Helen *(Peterborough)*
Clark, Dr Lynda *(Edinburgh Pentlands)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Charles *(Norwich S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Tom *(Coatbridge)*
Clarke, Tony *(Northampton S)*
Clwyd, Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry

Colman, Tony
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corston, Jean
Cotter, Brian
Cousins, Jim
Crausby, David
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, Mrs Ann *(Keighley)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr Jack *(Copeland)*
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'try S)*
Cunningham, Tony *(Workington)*
Curtis-Thomas, Mrs Claire
Darling, Rt Hon Alistair
Davey, Edward *(Kingston)*
Davey, Valerie *(Bristol W)*
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint *(Croydon C)*
Davis, Rt Hon Terry *(B'ham Hodge H)*
Dawson, Hilton
Dean, Mrs Janet
Denham, Rt Hon John
Dhanda, Parmjit
Dismore, Andrew
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, Rt Hon Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Doughty, Sue
Dowd, Jim
Drown, Ms Julia
Eagle, Angela *(Wallasey)*
Eagle, Maria *(L'pool Garston)*
Edwards, Huw
Efford, Clive
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Ennis, Jeff
Ewing, Annabelle
Farrelly, Paul
Fisher, Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fitzsimons, Mrs Lorna
Flint, Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Follett, Barbara
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Michael *(Worcester)*
Foster, Michael Jabez *(Hastings)*
Foulkes, George
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
George, Andrew *(St Ives)*
George, Rt Hon Bruce *(Walsall S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gibson, Dr Ian
Gidley, Sandra
Gilroy, Linda
Godsiff, Roger
Goggins, Paul
Green, Matthew *(Ludlow)*
Griffiths, Jane *(Reading E)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grogan, John
Hain, Rt Hon Peter
Hall, Patrick *(Bedford)*
Hamilton, David *(Midlothian)*
Hancock, Mike
Hanson, David
Harris, Dr Evan *(Oxford W)*
Harris, Tom *(Glasgow Cathcart)*
Havard, Dai
Healey, John
Heath, David
Henderson, Doug *(Newcastle N)*
Henderson, Ivan *(Harwich)*
Hendrick, Mark
Hepburn, Stephen
Heppell, John
Hesford, Stephen
Heyes, David
Hill, Keith
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Hope, Phil
Howarth, Rt Hon Alan *(Newport E)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay
Hughes, Beverley *(Stretford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark N)*
Humble, Mrs Joan
Hurst, Alan
Hutton, Rt Hon John
Iddon, Dr Brian
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Rt Hon Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(Hampstead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Hillsborough)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jamieson, David
Jenkins, Brian
Johnson, Alan *(Hull W & Hessle)*
Jones, Helen *(Warrington N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Kevan *(N Durham)*
Jones, Lynne *(Selly Oak)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S)*
Joyce, Eric
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan *(Feltham & Heston)*
Keen, Ann *(Brentford & Isleworth)*
Keetch, Paul
Kemp, Fraser
Khabra, Piara S
Kidney, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Andy *(Rugby & Kenilworth)*
King, Ms Oona *(Bethnal Green)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Jim *(S Dorset)*
Ladyman, Dr Stephen
Lamb, Norman
Lammy, David
Lawrence, Mrs Jackie
Laws, David
Laxton, Bob
Lazarowicz, Mark
Lepper, David
Leslie, Christopher
Levitt, Tom
Lewis, Ivan *(Bury S)*
Linton, Martin
Lloyd, Tony
Llwyd, Elfyn
Love, Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Luke, Iain
Lyons, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCabe, Stephen
McCafferty, Chris
McCartney, Rt Hon Ian
McDonagh, Siobhain
MacDonald, Calum
MacDougall, John
McFall, John
McGuire, Mrs Anne
McIsaac, Shona
McKechin, Ann
McKenna, Rosemary
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNulty, Tony
Mactaggart, Fiona
McWalter, Tony
McWilliam, John
Mahmood, Khalid
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallaber, Judy
Mann, John
Marris, Rob
Marsden, Gordon *(Blackpool S)*
Marsden, Paul *(Shrewsbury)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Rt Hon Michael
Meale, Alan
Merron, Gillian
Michael, Rt Hon Alun
Milburn, Rt Hon Alan
Miliband, David
Miller, Andrew
Moffatt, Laura
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moore, Michael
Moran, Margaret
Morgan, Julie
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Estelle
Mountford, Kali
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Munn, Ms Meg
Murphy, Denis *(Wansbeck)*
Murphy, Rt Hon Paul *(Torfaen)*
Naysmith, Dr Doug
Norris, Dan
Oaten, Mark
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Brien, Mike *(N Warks)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Öpik, Lembit
Organ, Diana
Osborne, Sandra *(Ayr)*
Owen, Albert
Palmer, Dr Nick
Pearson, Ian
Picking, Anne
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter
Plaskitt, James
Pollard, Kerry
Pond, Chris
Pope, Greg
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Sir Raymond
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Price, Adam
Primarolo, Dawn
Prosser, Gwyn
Purchase, Ken
Purnell, James
Quin, Rt Hon Joyce
Quinn, Lawrie
Rammell, Bill
Rapson, Syd
Raynsford, Rt Hon Nick
Reed, Andy *(Loughborough)*
Reid, Alan *(Argyll & Bute)*
Reid, Rt Hon Dr John *(Hamilton N)*
Rendel, David
Robertson, Angus *(Moray)*
Robertson, John *(Glasgow Anniesland)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, Joan
Russell, Bob *(Colchester)*
Russell, Ms Christine *(Chester)*
Salmond, Alex
Salter, Martin
Sanders, Adrian
Sarwar, Mohammad
Savidge, Malcolm
Sawford, Phil
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheridan, Jim
Shipley, Ms Debra
Simon, Siôn
Singh, Marsha
Smith, Rt Hon Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon Chris *(Islington S)*
Smith, Geraldine *(Morecambe)*
Smith, Jacqui *(Redditch)*
Smith, John *(Glamorgan)*
Smith, Sir Robert *(W Ab'd'ns)*
Soley, Clive
Southworth, Helen
Spellar, Rt Hon John
Squire, Rachel
Starkey, Dr Phyllis
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, David *(Inverness E)*
Stewart, Ian *(Eccles)*
Stinchcombe, Paul
Stoate, Dr Howard
Strang, Rt Hon Dr Gavin
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Stunell, Andrew
Tami, Mark
Taylor, Rt Hon Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ms Dari *(Stockton S)*
Taylor, David *(NW Leics)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Gareth *(Clwyd W)*
Thomas, Simon *(Ceredigion)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Todd, Mark
Tonge, Dr Jenny
Touhig, Don
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Dennis *(Wolverh'ton SE)*
Turner, Dr Desmond *(Kemptown)*
Turner, Neil *(Wigan)*
Twigg, Derek *(Halton)*
Twigg, Stephen *(Enfield)*
Tyler, Paul
Tynan, Bill
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Tom
Watts, David
Webb, Steve
Weir, Michael
White, Brian
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Swansea W)*
Williams, Mrs Betty *(Conwy)*
Williams, Hywel *(Caernarfon)*

Williams, Roger *(Brecon)*
Willis, Phil
Wills, Michael
Winnick, David
Winterton, Ms Rosie *(Doncaster C)*
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Woodward, Shaun
Woolas, Phil
Worthington, Tony
Wray, James
Wright, Anthony D *(Gt Yarmouth)*
Wright, David *(Telford)*
Wright, Tony *(Cannock)*
Wyatt, Derek
Younger-Ross, Richard

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Angela Smith and**
**Mr. Ivor Caplin.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(E Surrey)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, Rt Hon James
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bacon, Richard
Baldry, Tony
Barker, Gregory
Baron, John
Begg, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bercow, John
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blunt, Crispin
Boswell, Tim
Brady, Graham
Brazier, Julian
Browning, Mrs Angela
Burns, Simon
Burnside, David
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cameron, David
Campbell, Gregory *(E Lond'y)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sir Sydney *(Chipping Barnet)*
Chope, Christopher
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Collins, Tim
Conway, Derek
Cran, James
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Rt Hon David *(Haltemprice)*
Djanogly, Jonathan
Dodds, Nigel
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Duncan, Alan *(Rutland & Melton)*
Duncan, Peter *(Galloway)*
Duncan Smith, Rt Hon Iain
Evans, Nigel
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, Michael
Field, Mark *(Cities of London)*
Flight, Howard
Flook, Adrian
Forth, Rt Hon Eric
Fox, Dr Liam
Francois, Mark
Garnier, Edward
Gibb, Nick
Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Goodman, Paul
Gray, James
Grayling, Chris
Green, Damian *(Ashford)*
Greenway, John
Grieve, Dominic
Hague, Rt Hon William
Hammond, Philip
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, John
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, Rt Hon David
Hermon, Lady
Hoban, Mark
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Aldershot)*
Jack, Rt Hon Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson, Boris *(Henley)*
Key, Robert
Kirkbride, Miss Julie
Knight, Rt Hon Greg *(E Yorkshire)*
Laing, Mrs Eleanor
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lansley, Andrew
Leigh, Edward
Letwin, Oliver
Lewis, Dr Julian *(New Forest E)*
Liddell-Grainger, Ian
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
McIntosh, Miss Anne
MacKay, Rt Hon Andrew
Maclean, Rt Hon David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mates, Michael
Maude, Rt Hon Francis
May, Mrs Theresa
Mercer, Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Sutton Coldfield)*
Moss, Malcolm
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Norman, Archie
O'Brien, Stephen *(Eddisbury)*
Osborne, George *(Tatton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Paterson, Owen
Pickles, Eric
Prisk, Mark
Randall, John
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Hugh *(Faversham)*
Robertson, Laurence *(Tewk'b'ry)*
Robinson, Mrs Iris *(Strangford)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rosindell, Andrew
Ruffley, David
Sayeed, Jonathan
Selous, Andrew
Shepherd, Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spelman, Mrs Caroline
Spicer, Sir Michael
Spink, Bob
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Streeter, Gary
Swayne, Desmond
Swire, Hugo
Syms, Robert
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Dr Richard *(Wyre F)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Turner, Andrew *(Isle of Wight)*
Tyrie, Andrew
Viggers, Peter
Walter, Robert
Waterson, Nigel
Watkinson, Angela
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Rt Hon Miss Ann
Wiggin, Bill
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. David Wilshire and**
**Mr. Charles Hendry.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Bill read the Third time, and passed.*

## FOOTBALL (DISORDER) (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Ordered,*

That, during the proceedings on the Football (Disorder) (Amendment) Bill, the Standing Committee on the Bill shall have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet.—*[Dan Norris.]*

## PETITION

# Canvey Island (Southern Bypass)

10.18 pm

**Bob Spink** (Castle Point): The petition, signed by about 700 of my constituents, including Mr. Mark Dennis, who organised the petition and lives in Western esplanade, and by many illustrious fighters for the environment of Canvey Island, including Mrs. Eileen Gough and Edna Bowden, calls for the dropping of a proposal to build the Canvey Island southern bypass road. Many of the petitioners would agree that the resources that the road would require would be better applied to provide a third access road for Canvey Island.

In presenting the petition, it is my duty to inform the House that opinion on the matter on Canvey Island is mixed. The petition states:

The Humble Petition of the concerned residents and visitors of Canvey Island sheweth

That the proposed building of a southern bypass road on Canvey Island, Essex, connecting Roscommon Way to Western Esplanade should be abolished.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will urge the Transport Minister to abolish plans for a southern bypass road on Canvey Island, Essex, connecting Roscommon Way to Western Esplanade, and not to increase traffic flow on roads connected to this proposed bypass road.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## NHS Dentistry (South Somerset)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dan Norris.]*

10.19 pm

**Mr. David Laws** (Yeovil): I am very grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to raise an issue of great importance in my constituency. It is one of the issues that has featured most in my postbag since the general election. Indeed, concerns about access to NHS dentistry in south Somerset were also raised consistently with my predecessor, Lord Ashdown.

Yeovil has a particular problem with access to NHS dentistry. At present, no dentists in the area are taking new adult NHS patients. That has been a problem not only in recent weeks and months, but since at least two years before the general election. It is shared by many other areas in the region and in the other part of south Somerset represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath).

The issue can be encapsulated not only by the fact that no dentists in Yeovil are taking new adult NHS patients, but by the realisation that registrations of dental patients in Somerset have declined from about 69 per cent. of the adult population in 1993 to a low of just under 50 per cent. The level is now hovering around 50 per cent., which shows the great difficulty that many people in south Somerset are having in trying to get access to NHS dentistry.

That difficulty leads to a number of problems. First, the NHS dentists who are nearest to many of the towns in my constituency, such as Yeovil, Chard, Ilminster and Crewkerne, are based as much as 15 or 20 miles away. I am sure that the Under–Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Salford (Ms Blears), will agree that that is a great distance to go to benefit from a basic health service such as dentistry. In a rural area, transport is a difficulty for many people, which creates greater pressures.

The second problem that is caused by the lack of access to NHS dentistry is that many people are forced to opt for private provision, which is obviously more expensive and is very difficult for many people in the area to afford. Some people have found that their NHS dentists have converted to private practice and insisted that any NHS patients who want to stay with them should go private, at great additional expense.

Thirdly, there are many people who fall out of access to dentistry altogether and therefore cannot get the attention and especially the preventive care that they would expect. Progress on that problem has been slow in the constituency, which is a matter of concern for me and my hon. Friends in the surrounding area. A couple of years ago, the Prime Minister made a welcome pledge to increase access to NHS dentistry so that everybody had it. However, the Government seem to have modified that pledge over the past couple of years, so that people have access to a telephone number and operator for information, but not a dentist in their area.

I think that people in the main towns of my constituency—Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster—would have expected the Government's commitment to mean that they would be able to get access to an NHS dentist in their area. I raise that issue with the desire not to make a political point, but to emphasise to the Under-Secretary how great the problem is and to see whether we can find a way forward.

I have recently had the pleasure of formally opening the new NHS dental access centre in my constituency. Others have been opened in Chard and—I believe—in Taunton. That has to be a welcome development. It means that people who need emergency treatment can obtain it, which is obviously helpful for those particular individuals. The Under-Secretary will appreciate, however, that that does nothing to provide the on-going dental treatment that most people would want. I am sure that the Government wish to encourage such treatment, given their emphasis on preventive treatment not only in NHS dentistry but in all aspects of health care.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will agree that such treatment cannot be provided unless people see dentists regularly. Although I welcome the money that has been invested, it will not deal with the dental access problems in the constituency and the Government should not be encouraging it as the only solution. In some senses, it is a solution that treats failure but not the dental and other health problems that a proper system of NHS dentistry should tackle.

We appreciate that the problems are not new and that they go back to the reduction in fees for NHS dental treatment under a Conservative Administration. Access problems have therefore been prevalent for some time.

Anxiety also exists about the lack of trained dentists. More dentists going through our medical schools would help to tackle the shortage throughout the country. Local dentists and other health experts believe that the Government should deal with those two major problems if we are to make progress not only in south Somerset but throughout the country. We need more dentists and a revision of the fee structures that govern NHS treatments.

Much modernisation is required. Most dentists who have gone private in the past few years are resistant to transferring back to a national health service system in which their fees and ability to treat patients to a high level are significantly curtailed. It will be difficult to get many of them back into the NHS. We must therefore try to ensure that new dentists remain in it.

Such changes will take many years to effect, and people in Yeovil do not want to wait that long for action. They are not encouraged by the mere provision of access centres or Somerset health authority's commitment to stabilise registrations at the current level rather than increasing the proportion of people who are registered. I should like the same solutions that were applied in other parts of the country, such as north Devon, to be tried in Yeovil.

In north Devon, the health authority, the Government and private partners have worked together to attract dentists to the area and even used professional dentistry publications to draw attention to the gaps. However, we also need action to help dentists who want to establish practices in black hole areas where there is currently no provision.

There are major problems in identifying those areas and help for new dentists. Local newspapers such as the *Yeovil Express* and the *Western Gazette* have highlighted those issues, and many of those who recently wanted to set up practices in the area have been alerted to the problem only through that means. Dental practitioners whom my

*[Mr. David Laws]*

predecessor, Lord Ashdown, and I have tried to encourage to come to those areas in the past couple of years have looked to funding from Government schemes such as investing in dentistry and its successors to tackle the problems. The Minister knows how expensive it can be to set up a new practice. One has to secure appropriate property and much equipment as well as staff.

Information and financial support have been lacking. Perhaps the Minister recalls that, a couple of years ago, one of the investing in dentistry schemes had bids of approximately £1 million in the Somerset health authority area, but only around £80,000 was granted. There is a definite shortfall in assistance with the start-up costs.

I would not support endless subsidies on top of the ordinary payments that are made to NHS dentists, but it is important to give additional financial incentives to dentists who are moving to the black hole areas that we are considering. I hope that the Minister will say whether the Government propose to continue such schemes as investing in dentistry so that we can assist dentists to move to such areas.

My final point is not political. I accept that the Government are trying to tackle lack of access and to renew NHS dentistry after a period in which it has suffered. However, I am worried that the Government's ambitions, which the Prime Minister expressed, are not matched by the policy achievements and that some Government solutions, such as dental access centres, seem to provide only emergency and safety net treatment, which is better than nothing but not good enough for many of our constituents.

10.29 pm

**Annette Brooke** (Mid-Dorset and North Poole): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) for describing the situation so clearly. I am sure that many of us experience the same difficulties in our areas, and I want to make some general points that I think will support his case.

A recent survey by the magazine *Health Which?* suggested that two in five dental surgeries now accepted only private patients. We might well assume that there had been a mass exodus from NHS dentistry over the past 10 or 11 years. I believe that 1990 was a critical year: I am told that at that time the then Government were taking £15,000 from each NHS dentist. Although that was waived eventually, dentists obviously found that they could earn a better income without being in the NHS. As with all these things, once someone discovers something it sets the ball rolling in a direction that is difficult to change.

My hon. Friend mentioned a number of Government initiatives. Different initiatives are being operated by different local authorities in different areas. Has the Minister any evidence to indicate which are the most effective? Obviously local conditions should be taken into account, but the information would be interesting, given the range of measures that are being tried.

I am concerned because I feel that although a programme exists, the situation seems basically to be getting worse. I feel that we are treating the symptoms rather than the disease. We should be concerned not just about the shift, over time, of existing dentists to the private sector, but about the emergence of corporate bodies in dentistry. How much, for example—I have no idea of the answer—does a dentist employed by Boots receive for a check-up, compared with what the NHS would pay? That is cause for concern, because it could lead to further erosion. As my hon. Friend said, fee scales need to be addressed.

A recent survey of vocational trainee dentists showed that 75 per cent. were not prepared to commit themselves to the NHS. I understand that they felt there was no incentive, and also no real sense of the ethos of working in the public sector. This, I feel, is where the Government have a role to play in demonstrating that the NHS has a future, and in making the necessary investment.

Like people in south Somerset, my constituents often refer to the lack of NHS dentists. The problem arises when people moving into the area cannot register. They become quite distraught, and it is difficult just to pick up emergency treatment. I am also concerned—this probably applies to south Somerset as well—about people with special needs such as a lack of mobility and who therefore need home visits. I am told that home visits are not a very attractive option for private dentists. We must therefore rely on the NHS, and there are long waiting lists.

Let me illustrate the seriousness of the situation with the example of a ward in my constituency, Canford Heath, which contains 6,000 new properties full of families with young children. There are currently no NHS dentists. Single mums in particular have no incentive to take their children to the dentist. We are storing up so many problems for the future by failing to provide preventive care at that early stage. I ask the Minister to assure us that a much larger programme of investment in NHS dentistry is planned.

10.33 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ms Hazel Blears):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) on securing this important debate on NHS dentistry, particularly as it affects his constituents. I know about his written question in June. He is already building up quite a record of pursuing these matters on behalf of his constituents, and I am aware that his predecessor had several meetings about the issue.

This is an excellent opportunity for me to tell the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) some of the good news that we do have, while recognising that we still have a long way to go in providing full coverage for access to NHS dentistry across the country, as well as in south Somerset.

It is true that Somerset has suffered from long-standing problems. As both hon. Members said, the 1990s witnessed a nationwide decline in patient registration with NHS dentists, with a corresponding increase in access problems for the public. Additionally, in September 1996, the then Government cut the maximum time allowed between visits for a patient to remain registered with an NHS dentist from 24 months to 15 months. That caused many patients' registration to lapse without their even knowing it. In total, the number of adults registered plummeted from a 1993 high of about 21 million adults to just over 16 million adults by 1999. That is the scale of the problem, and I would not seek to minimise it.

About 45 per cent. of adults and 68 per cent. of children in Somerset are registered with an NHS dentist. Although that is not a wonderful figure, it is slightly higher than the national average. However, a worryingly small number of practices in the area have been willing to take on new NHS patients. There has also been a scarcity of urgent and emergency dental care across the county.

We recognised the access problems when, in September 2000, we published "Modernising NHS Dentistry—Implementing the NHS Plan". The plan committed the Government to ensuring that everyone can access an NHS dentist if and when they need to do so; to trying to improve the quality of service offered by NHS dentists; to raising the level of oral health, particularly in children—a preventive care issue that both hon. Members have raised today; and to trying to tackle the inequalities that exist across communities.

Alongside the Government's review of dentistry, in September 1999 the Prime Minister pledged that by the end of September 2001 everyone would be able to find an NHS dentist simply by telephoning NHS Direct. People do not simply receive a telephone number, they receive information on how to gain access to an NHS dentist. I acknowledge that that service is not about on-going registration; it is about providing access to care, not only for urgent and emergency cases but for routine cases.

In the past 18 months the Government have spent £100 million in trying to implement that dental strategy. That is not a small sum, and it shows the importance that we attach to trying to get NHS dentistry back into the mainstream of the service. We have spent £7 million from the dental care development fund to try to improve existing NHS practices, and £35 million from modernisation fund moneys to try to encourage dentists who are committed to the NHS to improve their practices. We have also asked every health authority to produce a dentistry action plan to set out the practical action that has to be taken to ensure that dentistry is available in communities.

Given the long-standing problems in Somerset, we were particularly keen to ensure that the area should receive the benefit of the whole range of the Government's current schemes. The Somerset dentistry action plan adopted a set of standards for the maximum time that patients should have to wait and the maximum distance that they would have to travel to gain access to NHS dentists. The standards are that they should have to travel a maximum of 10 miles for routine care—not 20 miles, as the hon. Member for Yeovil said, although 10 miles is still a fair distance to have to travel—and a maximum of 15 miles for urgent care and emergency care. Those standards are on a par with those set for rural areas by other health authorities in England.

The action plan identified several areas of risk that were likely to fail those standards and noted several very vulnerable areas, such as Wincanton and Chard. It also recognised that, across the county, patients who did not have an on-going registration found it very difficult to access urgent and emergency care.

The action plan therefore tried to identify practical action that we could take to address those issues, and the local health authority bid for considerable funds to try to put in place facilities. In 2000-01, the Government invested £71,000, and, in 2001-02, that figure has doubled to £144,000. That investment should allow registration for an extra 2,500 patients in Yeovil, 3,500 in Langport and 2,500 in Castle Cary. That should help to ease the pressure.

As well as encouraging those initiatives, we have tried to channel funds into Taunton, to ease pressure on dentists in the south Somerset region. South Somerset also received almost £59,000 of modernisation fund moneys for distribution to existing practices.

**Sir Paul Beresford** (Mole Valley): I have an interest in this subject, albeit not in the particular area. The hon. Members for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) and for Mid-Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) touched on one of the core problems—the fee structure. The Government have to decide whether they are providing a basic service or a full service. In doing so, they must recognise the escalating costs—running costs and capital costs—and the increasing complexity of dentistry today. The service that the Minister is speaking of is mis-targeted, and dentists will move into the private sector. She must also recognise that in providing a service through the private sector, dentists are supplementing the NHS, and that frequently, especially for children, the cost to the patient is low or—as in my case—zero.

**Ms Blears:** The hon. Gentleman should recognise that the Government's aim is to try to rebuild NHS dentistry after the devastating effects of the early 1990s. From my discussions with the profession, it is obvious that many dentists welcome change. They want to change the way they work and to try to move from payments for items of service into more preventive work in oral health and in tackling inequalities. Many excellent young dentists are coming through the system who are keen to explore new ways of working. That needs to be reflected in the fee system. My dealings with the profession have shown a real willingness to engage in new ways of working to try to ensure that NHS dentistry begins to recover from the tremendous onslaught of the early 1990s.

We have tried to put considerable money into Somerset. We have allowed £20,000 for spot contracting, to try to purchase additional sessions from existing dentists. That has been fairly successful and has resulted in 100 extra appointments a week in the area. The hon. Member for Yeovil mentioned dental access centres, and I am delighted that he had the opportunity to open one. I am sure that it was an enjoyable occasion. The first DAC was opened in Yeovil and the second in Taunton. The first site involved £500,000 of capital investment and costs £855,000 a year in revenue expenditure. That is a considerable service. There are plans to extend the DACs to cover the entire county, and an additional £1.5 million will be provided to do so.

Once all the sites have been opened, the DACs will employ eight practitioners and will look to provide more than 15,000 courses of treatment a year. They will also be able to deal with 8,000 emergency cases a year. It is a new form of provision, especially for the routine care that people need. We are trying to rebuild the NHS dentistry service and of course we want existing dentists to come into the system and increase the proportion of their NHS practice. In places where that is not happening, however, the DACs are providing a much-needed service to local people.

*[Ms Blears]*

We are also trying to ensure that we work closely with health authorities and primary care groups to try to recruit new dentists to the basic service. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that that is not easy, and he mentioned the need to make information available about the location of areas of unmet need and to provide support.

**Mr. Laws:** I welcome the dental access centres, but my great concern is that they are not a replacement for the on-going dental care that people need. Does the Minister accept that it is unsatisfactory that my constituency has no dentist who will take new adult NHS patients? Would it be satisfactory if that were still the situation in a year's time?

**Ms Blears:** The hon. Gentleman will recognise that the Government have little power to compel dentists to take part in NHS activities. This is a market. Dentists decide for themselves whether they want to be in the NHS or to undertake extensive private practice. The Government are trying to put in place incentives so that existing NHS dentists increase the proportion of their practice that is in the NHS. Other incentives are aimed at getting dentists to improve their premises and equipment, so that they stay in the NHS.

The Government are also undertaking longer-term work to do with fee structures and new ways of working. In that way, we hope to encourage some exciting and innovative new dentists to work in the NHS. We are working with health authorities and primary care groups to support the recruitment of dentists for mainstream services. We are helping with advertising costs, which are crucial in recruitment. We are also providing relocation expenses to dentists willing to move to new areas.

Most importantly, we are offering assistance with short-term accommodation. Taking on new premises is a very big step, so the Government are helping dentists to move on a short-term basis initially, with accommodation provided to which they do not have to commit in the long term. In that way, we hope that dentists will be enticed back into the NHS, and that they will want to remain because they enjoy the work. We are therefore trying to be as imaginative as possible in providing incentives to draw people back into the service.

The Government have asked dentists locally for recommendations about what else they would like us to do. We want to help, and we have asked dentists for their ideas about how we can draw them back into the NHS. The dental access centre in Yeovil has been able to recruit dentists: the fact that there are eight whole-time equivalent dentists in that centre shows that the task is not impossible. I hope that the same persistence will pay off elsewhere, and that the support mechanisms on offer to existing practices will help them to augment the work that they do.

We must accept that being a general dental practitioner became distinctly unattractive in the 1990s. The Government are now working nationally with the profession to change that and to make dentistry an integral element of NHS care. People's teeth and oral health are as important as any other aspect of health care. Drawing dentists back into the centre of the NHS is a top priority for the Government, and I would welcome ideas and suggestions—from the profession and elsewhere—about how we can create a vibrant NHS service. Such a service is needed by people in Somerset and in Yeovil, as it is by people right across the country.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 18 October 2001*

*The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

### Household Waste

1. **Mr. Andrew Love** (Edmonton): What action she is taking to reduce the proportion of household waste that is put into landfill; and if she will make a statement. [466]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Margaret Beckett):** In "Waste Strategy 2000" the Government made clear our determination to minimise waste production and to maximise recycling and composting wherever that is cost-effective to reduce our reliance on landfill.

We have a landfill tax that encourages diversion of waste away from landfill and there will be further reviews of its rate. We also consulted earlier this year on a system of tradeable landfill permits to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste that goes to landfill and to meet the directive targets.

To achieve more recycling and composting, we have set tough statutory targets, under best value, for local authorities to double the amount of household waste recycled by 2003–04 and to treble it by 2005–06. To support those targets, we have increased funding to local authorities, including a £140 million ring-fenced grant and £40 million to set up the waste and resources action programme, a company that will tackle market barriers for recycled products.

**Mr. Love:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. There are two main alternatives to landfill. The first, as she suggested, is recycling and the other is incineration. To encourage both, recent departmental guidance said:

"Energy from waste plant should be appropriately sized . . . and avoid 'crowding out' recycling".

Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a strong argument to suggest that we should not concentrate incineration in a small number of plants, such as the one in my constituency, but that we should spread them out across the country where the benefits of combined heat and power can be realised?

**Margaret Beckett:** I am well aware of my hon. Friend's concern about the proposals for his constituency. He will be aware that they are not a matter for my Department, but I take his point. I am grateful to him for suggesting that we should consider the way in which some incineration might be used and for recognising that there is a role for such use.

**Mr. Peter Duncan** (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale): What plans does the Secretary of State have to deal with the increasing problem of fly-tipping in rural areas? She will be aware that it is not only unsightly and a health problem, but places an increasing burden on farmers and landowners who are, after all, responsible for the cost of disposing of it.

**Margaret Beckett:** I am aware of the problem, as all hon. Members are. The hon. Gentleman will understand the difficulties, because much of the material tipped in this way is household waste. We will seek to place a range of pressures on individuals and on local authorities when that is the right approach to minimise the occurrence of such events and to deal with them when they occur.

**Mr. David Lepper** (Brighton, Pavilion): I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that the non-metal components of cars whose lives have come to an end are an increasingly important element in landfill sites. Is she aware of the innovative work on the recycling of those components that has been carried out by Professor Peter Gardiner and his colleagues at the university of Brighton and its subsidiary, the Brighton environmental body? Will she ask her officials to give serious consideration to the results of that research?

**Margaret Beckett:** I am conscious of the excellent work that is being done in Brighton and other areas. I am also conscious of the innovative work that is being done by many people in British research institutes and universities to try to tackle these problems. It is one of the sectors—in the United Kingdom and across the world—where there are opportunities for innovation and for new business to be developed. It has long been my wish to do more to encourage that development.

**Mr. Jonathan Sayeed** (Mid-Bedfordshire): I am surprised that the Secretary of State did not refer to reducing the amount of waste. That is the first step. However, she might not have referred to it because the Government have not managed to reduce the amount of household waste. Reducing household waste and recycling are important waste management strategies.

It is a pity that, in 1998–99, 19 per cent. of Conservative councils did not make separate provision for the collection of household recyclables, but the Secretary of State might like to know that I have written to each and every one of them. But why is it that, according to Audit Commission figures, 29 per cent. of Liberal Democrat-controlled councils and 42 per cent. of Labour-controlled councils have made no provision whatever?

We know that the Liberal Democrats are little more than environmental poseurs, but if the Secretary of State cannot persuade her own party to act green, what have the Government been doing for the past four years?

**Margaret Beckett:** The hon. Gentleman asks what the Government have been doing, but I am sorry to say that it appears that he has not been listening. I pointed out in

my reply that the Government have set demanding targets to double household waste recycling by 2003–04 and almost treble it by 2005–06. We believe that that will transform the position, which I accept is not sufficiently good in areas run by councils of all political shades.

The hon. Gentleman began his remarks by accusing me of having said nothing about reducing the incidence of waste, and I must point out to him that I referred to that in the first sentence of my reply.

**Mr. Bill O'Brien** (Normanton): May I remind my right hon. Friend that household waste increases each year, thus posing a great problem for local authorities in particular and communities in general? When did she last meet representatives of the packaging waste industry to reinforce the regulations on the reduction of packaging waste and to ensure that there will be less such waste going into landfill?

**Margaret Beckett:** I share my hon. Friend's view that household waste is a great problem for local authorities. That is why, although I do not agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Sayeed), I do agree that it is incumbent on us all to do everything that we can to minimise the production of waste.

I fear that I have not met representatives from the industry's association to which my hon. Friend referred, although my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment meets them on a regular basis. Obviously, it is one of the many organisations that have a pressing claim on my time. In the first week after my appointment, 400 organisations announced their pressing need for a meeting with the Secretary of State, and my hon. Friend will understand that it is not always easy to accommodate all those with a genuine need and desire to meet me.

## Flood Defences (Wyre Forest)

2. **Dr. Richard Taylor** (Wyre Forest): What plans she has to visit Wyre Forest to inspect the proposed flood defences during their construction at Bewdley. [4669]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr. Elliot Morley):** I have no such plans at present, but I have carried out a programme of visits this summer to flood and coastal defence schemes under construction and completed, and always welcome the opportunity to do so.

**Dr. Taylor:** I thank the Minister for his reply and assure him that if he decides to visit my constituency, he will receive a warmer welcome than was afforded to the Prime Minister last November. Will he recognise the expertise of the Bewdley residents flood committee, which has organised flood defence fairs across the country, and look favourably on an application from the committee for funding its aim to set up a national flood defence forum and flood action network?

**Mr. Morley:** I accompanied the Prime Minister on his visit to Bewdley, and the people were very grateful to him for taking the trouble to visit when they were suffering the effects of floods. I certainly pay tribute to the residents committee. Its members came to see me in London, and I was impressed by their ideas as well as their energy and drive. The committee has not submitted proposals for a national forum directly to the Department, but if it wanted to do so, I would give them careful consideration.

**Mr. Michael Foster** (Worcester): Will my hon. Friend give me an assurance, if not at the Dispatch Box then perhaps in writing, that when flood defences are constructed in Bewdley, they will not have a detrimental effect downstream in Worcester? When the Environment Agency announces plans for flood defences in Worcester, will he do all that he can to make sure that the cash is available to pay for them?

**Mr. Morley:** By 2003, expenditure on flood and coastal defences will have increased by about 50 per cent. since last year. We recognise that there is a need for more resources. I can assure my hon. Friend that the assessment of any flood defence scheme takes into account any possible detrimental effects downstream or within the catchment area. We are looking at the Severn as part of a catchment area study, which will include his area.

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): The constituents of the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor) have been in touch with me more than once because North Yorkshire shares the problem of flooding. I listened carefully to their suggestions on establishing a national flood defence forum, an idea that I commend to the Minister.

Surely the problem is that there is inadequate direction from Government. There is insufficient responsibility because far too many agencies are involved in the provision of flood defences. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have suffered from the problem in the past few months as a result of the October flooding. Can the Minister assure the House that the Government are not satisfied with the present arrangements and will introduce proposals so that central Government ensure that there is strong Executive power to improve and strengthen our flood defences?

**Mr. Morley:** Following the recommendations of the former Agriculture Committee, we are carrying out a full funding review of flood and coastal defence, the results of which will be published shortly. Flood and coastal defence is a shared responsibility between central and local government. There is an important element of local democracy because local councils are represented on regional flood defence committees. That is a strength although, as the hon. Gentleman knows, there are sometimes weaknesses in local democracy and problems with local issues.

## Recycling

3. **Ian Lucas** (Wrexham): What assessment she has made of the effect a tax on incineration set at the same level as the landfill tax would have on the level of recycling carried out by local authorities in England and Wales. [4670]

**The Minister for the Environment (Mr. Michael Meacher):** We have set local authority statutory targets that will almost triple recycling and composting of household waste from the 1998–99 baseline by 2005–06, as my right hon. Friend said. We have set up the waste

and resources action programme to foster markets for recycled materials. We consulted on a system of tradeable permits for biodegradable municipal waste. Given those instruments, I doubt whether an incineration tax is needed at this stage to secure our main priority of diverting waste from landfill to recycling.

**Ian Lucas:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that there is great concern in my constituency about the relative amount of recycling and incineration outlined in a recent application to site a waste recovery centre there? What steps will the Secretary of State take to ensure that the recycling targets set out in "Waste Strategy 2000" are met and that the amount of future incineration is minimised?

**Mr. Meacher:** When we set statutory recycling targets, sanctions are attached to ensure that they are achieved. I assure my hon. Friend that they will be. We will keep track of all local authorities to ensure that they are making progress and will want to know why if they are not. We are offering managerial advice as part of the waste resources action programme. If need be, we can take action to put in place managerial systems that will deliver targets in each local authority.

I understand that a waste management private finance initiative project is being considered for Wrexham. A major part of that will be a facility that is designed, built, financed and operated by the private sector and will include incineration. That is still at the procurement stage. The business plan has to be passed by the Minister for Finance in the Welsh Assembly. Planning consent is then needed. However, whatever Wrexham decides, it must meet its recycling targets.

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien** (Eddisbury): As the constituency of the hon. Member for Wrexham (Ian Lucas) neighbours Eddisbury, I have an equal interest in that plant and proposal. How can the Minister square the tax answers, which affect both England and Wales, with the decoupling of planning as a result of the devolution arrangements? My constituents might be most affected by the fallout from that incineration plant but have no rights of representation in the planning process. They are deeply concerned about that.

**Mr. Meacher:** The hon. Gentleman raises the devolution arrangements. It is our view that all reasonable powers should be devolved to the Assembly in the case of Wales and the Executive in the case of Scotland, and that is what we have done. However, tax is not a devolved matter. That is why the recommendation that I understand is in the Welsh draft waste management strategy—the Assembly's initial view—that there should be a tax on incineration will be considered duly by the United Kingdom Government, although the matter is of course entirely for the Treasury.

**Syd Rapson** (Portsmouth, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the landfill tax credit scheme, whereby tax is recycled to local partnerships to create environmental schemes for areas that are affected by landfill. There is some concern that that scheme will be scrapped. I urge the Government to reconsider the effects of doing so, as we in Portsmouth have certainly benefited from it and want it to continue.

**Mr. Meacher:** I am well aware of the mixed views on the landfill tax credit scheme. There is no question but that it has benefited many environmental projects, particularly to do with wildlife and biodiversity. Whatever changes might be made in any new arrangements—let me make it clear to my hon. Friend that a decision has not yet been taken—I would be extremely anxious to ensure that such benefits were secured. However, the proportion of the moneys that are raised by the credit scheme that goes into local recycling is not nearly enough. We have used indicative targets to try to increase it, but the issue remains whether that is adequate.

**Dr. John Pugh** (Southport): Will the Minister acknowledge that the way in which waste authorities apportion local council landfill tax is not always fair and equitable? A poor example in that respect is the Merseyside waste disposal authority. Some local authorities charge not by the tonne but by population and council tax banding, and therefore have no financial incentive to recycle. Will he consider tightening guidance given to waste disposal authorities to ensure that those that recycle the most pay the least?

**Mr. Meacher:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. The overwhelming thrust of the Government's waste management strategy is to achieve the maximum feasible increase in recycling. He is right that the structure of the allocation of moneys does not always optimise that. We are certainly considering his point.

## Landfill Sites

4. **Dr. Phyllis Starkey** (Milton Keynes, South-West): If she will make a statement on the powers of the Environment Agency to regulate landfill sites. [4671]

**The Minister for the Environment (Mr. Michael Meacher):** Waste disposal sites including landfills are regulated by the Environment Agency using powers in part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994.

**Dr. Starkey:** In the first seven months of this year, my constituents in Bletchley were subjected to incredibly high levels of hydrogen sulphide emissions from the landfill at Shanks Waste Services Ltd. in Newton Longville. The Environment Agency has now required Shanks to bring the situation under control and the nuisance appears to have ceased. I believe that charges are being brought against Shanks for breaches of the licence conditions. However, there is great concern among my constituents that the Environment Agency did not detect the problems as they were building up and seemed to take action only once my constituents had suffered a very high level of nuisance and there was a potential health hazard.

Will the Minister undertake to investigate whether the Environment Agency's failure was due to it having inadequate powers to undertake proper monitoring or due simply to inadequately exercised powers?

**Mr. Meacher:** I do not believe that the existing powers are inadequate, and I hear what my hon. Friend says about the exercise of those powers. The Environment Agency served four enforcement notices on Shanks, the landfill operator, in February for compliance by April.

The operator failed to comply on any count and, therefore, the agency suspended its licence on 1 May. As a result, the operator undertook some major improvements on the site, and the suspension has now been lifted, but the agency is still making, and will continue to make, weekly unannounced inspections of the site to assess compliance with the licence conditions and, as my hon. Friend said, it is also prosecuting the operator for breach of licence. I take the point, which she made, that the agency did not act fast enough. If she will give me the evidence, I will certainly pursue it.

**Mr. James Gray** (North Wiltshire): Of course, we entirely support the Government's laudable aim of reducing landfill by increasing recycling, but in that context what does the Minister think about the activities of Liberal Democrat-controlled North Wiltshire district council, which recently announced that it will do away with the free collection of household goods for recycling and introduce a charge instead? To facilitate that, it has opened a recycling centre that is miles and miles away from anyone who wants to recycle. What does the Minister think about that?

**Mr. Meacher:** I always seek to be cautious in intruding local grief, but I am aware of the very real problem that the hon. Gentleman mentions because the Liberal-controlled council in Oldham has done exactly the same thing. Perhaps he and I can get together to monitor the effects that the rather curious and perverse charge may have. The charge is unwise and imprudent. It raises a small amount of money, but produces a very severe disincentive to recycle, which, I thought, we all wanted to encourage.

**Mr. Tony McWalter** (Hemel Hempstead): I am disappointed about my right hon. Friend's answer because there seem to be major limitations in the Environment Agency's powers. For example, when a so-called golf course was being constructed in my area and lorry loads of topsoil were coming out of the site and hundreds of lorry loads of rubbish were going into it every day, the Environment Agency kept telling us that it could inspect the lorries, but could not inspect the apparent golf course. I hope that he realises that the Environment Agency is saying that it sometimes does not have the powers to do what it should.

**Mr. Meacher:** This is an unusual question session because I have to tell my hon. Friend that in Oldham we, too, have what he calls a so-called golf course, which has been used for the tipping of materials, and the residents have been concerned about their potentially hazardous nature. In fact, answers have been given and there have been assurances that the materials are not hazardous. The issue arises out of waste management licence exemptions, and I share the view that those exemptions have been granted too readily and that they need to be tightened up. If he will give me details of his case, that will certainly add to the dossier that will help me to take some action.

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth** (East Surrey): Has the Minister had a chance to consult the Environment Agency about the prospect of having to dispose of up to 1 million old fridges each year because of Government incompetence? Are they now destined for landfill sites? When Ministers blithely signed up to EC regulation 2037 on products containing CFCs, did they simply overlook the fact that it is almost impossible to implement? The Department has now told local authorities that it will urgently review the situation. I should hope so—there has been a chance urgently to review the situation for the past four years. Is not "urgent review" Labour-speak for "haven't got a clue"? If not, what exactly are the Government's plans?

**Mr. Meacher:** I recognise that the hon. Gentleman is new to these matters, but I can assure him that, as he might well expect, when the issue was discussed in the Environment Council, the chlorofluorocarbon content of used fridges was exhaustively discussed. The issue of exports and effects on other countries was carefully examined. We are, of course, looking at the technology; in fact, a great deal of work has been done on the technology of removing CFCs from fridges and storing them safely. I hope that he does not take the view that fridges should continue to be landfilled.

Of course changes, reforms and improvements take place all the time but, in 20 years under the Conservative Government, fridges were just chucked into landfills. We do not think that that is proper; a more environmentally sensitive way of dealing with the problem is needed, and we are providing it.

## Radioactive Waste

5. **Mr. David Chaytor** (Bury, North): What her policy is on the management of radioactive waste. [4672]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Margaret Beckett):** The Government and the devolved Administrations published the consultation paper, "Managing radioactive waste safely" on 12 September. We propose a programme of national debate and research, leading to scientifically sound decisions on the long-term management of radioactive waste which, we hope, will inspire greater public confidence across the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Chaytor:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her reply. Can she give the House the latest estimates of the cost of decommissioning existing power stations and the management of waste? Would it be wildly inaccurate to suggest that that cost is in the region of £85 billion? Who will bear the cost regarding existing stockpiles of waste? Will she seek to ensure that, if there is any new nuclear build following the publication of the energy review in December, the costs of the management of waste are built into the initial economics of power generation?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that, following the recent horrific evidence of terrorist groups gaining access to biological materials of warfare, it is now only a matter of time before they gain access to nuclear materials as weapons of war? Has she discussed that matter with—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. That is too much for the Secretary of State to take in.

**Margaret Beckett:** My hon. Friend is entirely right; the figure of £85 billion is correct, and includes all civil, military, public and private radioactive waste as well as the costs of decommissioning. A rough breakdown of the figure is that some £34 billion relates to British Nuclear Fuels plc; some £30 billion to Ministry of Defence matters; some £7 billion to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority; and some £14 billion to British Energy. The final cost of managing such waste depends on the decisions made in the light of the consultation that we initiated and, indeed, on the classification of radioactive waste.

My hon. Friend asked who will bear the costs of handling such waste; one way or another, our economy will bear those costs in some capacity. He asked about the performance and innovation unit review; he will know that that process is under way and any recommendations that it might make are some distance away. However, he is certainly correct; I am mindful that, on a number of occasions, those outside Government have long advised that the full knock-on costs of such projects should be part of the decision-making structure at the beginning, not something that emerges at the end. We certainly believe that that is a sound basis for planning.

**Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): Will the Secretary of State explain how her recent decision to give the go-ahead to the Sellafield mixed oxide plant fits into her radioactive waste management strategy? Given that the Irish Government are now mounting a legal challenge and Sellafield has a history of leaks and fraudulent data, there is a lack of confidence in the management of the plant. Will she explain why in her announcement she concentrated on the economic aspects of the development, rather than the environmental aspects? Does she not recognise that there is considerable concern, not only about leakage from the plant but, in the post-September 11 circumstances, about the risk of an attack on shipments of plutonium by suicide terrorists? Has she made an evaluation of that, or does she not think that she should?

**Margaret Beckett:** To take the hon. Gentleman's last point first, he must be aware that that issue has been evaluated. There are risks in the existence of such a plant and those risks are little changed by the decision that was made. However, whether they made a difference was carefully considered.

The hon. Gentleman asks how the plant fits in. It is in the public domain that during the anticipated operational lifetime of the plant—a considerable number of years—the expectation is that it will add only about 1 per cent. to the total level of intermediate level waste now generated at Sellafield. The decision that the plant should go ahead was based on a range of environmental and other considerations.

The hon. Gentleman asked why I concentrated on the economic aspect. There is a mixture of issues here. First, a legal duty was laid on myself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, the nature of which is set down in the basic standards enshrined in statute. Secondly, not only have there been extensive and numerous consultations on the issue during the past three or four years, but the Environment Agency recommended that the environmental aspects did not impede going ahead with the plant and, having done all the independent economic assessments, recommended that the plant should go ahead.

**Judy Mallaber** (Amber Valley): As my right hon. Friend knows, the Environment Agency has asked Rolls-Royce Marine Power Operations Ltd. to apply for new authorisations for its work in Derby and the associated approval since 1966 for the dumping of gloves, coveralls and other items contaminated with low-level radioactive waste at Hilts Quarry at Crich in my constituency. Is she aware that since the Environment Agency started looking in detail at the application, and with the advent of a local protest group, Rolls-Royce has somehow managed to reduce its waste substantially, now tipping a lorry load only once every eight weeks instead of weekly? Will she ensure that the agency applies similar pressure to minimise waste elsewhere? I realise that she cannot comment on an application currently being determined, but will she look sympathetically at any request to transfer the Rolls-Royce waste to a more secure site that is not unlined and in a village next to a school?

**Margaret Beckett:** As my hon. Friend accepts, I am aware of the basic issue, and it is clear from what she said that she is aware that these are matters for the Environment Agency. I freely confess that I am not aware whether the amount of waste has been substantially reduced or is simply being transported less often. However, those are issues that the Environment Agency, with the company, keeps under review and we retain information on those matters from time to time.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield): In the light of the present situation, does the Government have a view regarding the transportation of waste through residential areas, especially London?

**Margaret Beckett:** The transportation of waste is always a sensitive and difficult issue. The hon. Gentleman will know that over the years many studies have been carried out and the issue of how to maintain high security is always kept under review.

## Farming

6. **Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): What the contribution of the farming industry was as a proportion of English gross domestic product in the latest year for which figures are available; and what the average figure is for the last five years. [4673]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr. Elliot Morley):** The contribution of the farming industry as a proportion of English gross domestic product in 2000 was £5 billion—0.7 per cent. The average contribution during the years 1996 to 2000 was 1 per cent.

**Paul Flynn:** When subsidies are taken into account, the total contribution made by agriculture in the four years

before foot and mouth was less than 0.5 per cent., compared with manufacturing industry which contributes 20 per cent. We know that the contribution is now less than zero. We all feel sympathy with the farming industry as a result of the suffering caused by foot and mouth, but is it reasonable to expect manufacturing industry, particularly the steel industry which is facing a new crisis, to contribute to and subsidise just one industry alone? Is not the answer to listen to what Lord Haskins is saying today and for farming to be made more entrepreneurial in future, rather than continue with the mistake that we have made in farming since the war where the industry has been subsidy sensitive but market blind?

**Mr. Morley:** My noble Friend Lord Haskins is a farmer and business man. His assessment is important and will be listened to carefully by the entire farming industry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that the future for farmers is to become closer to the market and more consumer and customer oriented. The present level of subsidies to agriculture is not sustainable in the long term—it is not good for the consumer or the environment, and it has not been good for farmers as it has distorted the market. The Food and Farming Commission, which the Government have set up, will provide important pointers for the future of farming. There is no doubt that changes need to be made: we live in a changing and dynamic society, and agriculture is part of that.

**Mr. David Curry** (Skipton and Ripon): The Minister is aware of the contribution made by the sheep industry to gross domestic product, especially in the uplands. In the light of that, can he explain the total confusion that has arisen over the research programme into BSE in sheep? Is he aware that the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee has apparently cancelled the meeting at which that was to be discussed? At 10.30 last night, DEFRA apparently put out a press release about it.

On the radio news this morning, it was said that the samples that were being examined to find out whether there was BSE in sheep were actually samples from cows. A state of total confusion has descended, and the matter is of colossal importance to the entire agricultural industry. Can the Minister tell us what is happening? If he cannot tell us now, will he come back to the House as soon as possible and be specific about it?

**Mr. Morley:** In all matters relating to BSE and animal health, the Government have been open and transparent. For that reason, the Government and our Department commissioned DNA testing in relation to the long-term experiment being carried out by Professor Bostock and the Institute for Animal Health. There were some concerns that there may be contamination by bovine brain material in the experiment. The step taken was appropriate and prudent, in order to control the quality of the research.

As it happened, the results of the DNA testing, which did not come out until this week, demonstrated that there was serious contamination of the sample, and that in fact it was predominantly bovine brain material. There will have to be a full audit trail and evaluation of the experiment. It is therefore not surprising that SEAC has cancelled the meeting scheduled for Friday until we can evaluate the situation carefully.

**Paddy Tipping** (Sherwood): But is it not the case that farming produces a wider economic contribution to the rural economy, in that it provides a landscape and an environment that people wish to visit? Given that, is it not rather strange that there are those who argue against compensation for farming instead of tourism, and against greater investment for rural rather than urban areas? Those things are interdependent. Should not that be the policy that we support?

**Mr. Morley:** All independent studies and our recent rural White Paper demonstrate the clear interdependence between urban and rural areas, and between agriculture and other rural businesses, including tourism and the leisure sector. Agriculture is the country's biggest land user, so it has a key role not only in food production, which is its primary objective, but landscape, habitat and biodiversity measures. For those reasons, the Government are committed to shifting the current damaging and market-distorting subsidies in the common agricultural policy from production support to the second pillar of the common agricultural policy, the rural development structure, so that we can develop all those aspects in a holistic and integrated way that will benefit agriculture, the rural economy and the economy generally.

**David Burnside** (South Antrim): Does the Minister share my concern, which is also the concern of the entire farming community, that in the departmental strategic review of policy, farming was listed as only the fifth priority? Is it not about time that the Government started to build confidence by restoring agriculture to the departmental title of the Department, and followed that up with more constructive policies for the farming community?

**Mr. Morley:** I think that it is a serious mistake to try to apply a league table of priorities to Departments' aims and objectives. DEFRA was formed, quite rightly, to bring together a range of environmental, land-use objectives in an integrated way. I believe that that is the view of the majority in the House and certainly the majority of people outside the House, as well as in the agricultural sector. In that respect, those are all important issues. DEFRA covers not just agriculture but environmental issues, land use, forestry, floods and environmental control. It is a strength of the Department that it does so, and we should not try to prioritise the list or draw up league tables.

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth** (East Surrey): The Minister talks about transparency; the only thing that is transparent is the muddle and confusion that the Government have brought to this whole area of their competence. Is he aware that farmers are saying that the Government do not understand or care; that it is no good telling farmers that they must change without telling them how; that they need not lectures from Ministers but clarity and leadership; and that, with earnings down to a pathetic £2,500 a year they cannot invest in the future? How can farmers be entrepreneurs when they have no funds to invest? Does the Minister accept that if there is no viable future for

farming, it will not just be the rural economy that suffers, but the whole economy, our environment and millions of people and businesses, whether they live in the countryside or the towns?

**Mr. Morley:** Of course farming has suffered a decline in income, but that has gone on for years. It is not a recent issue. Farming has been going through structural changes for a very long time—since 1945—and those changes will continue. Our job is to try to work in partnership with the industry to manage those changes and assist farmers. We contribute some £3 billion a year to agriculture, which is a high level of subsidy.

The hon. Gentleman talks about understanding. In my frequent meetings with farmers and land-use managers, they say that they very much appreciate the direction that the Government are taking. Those who use the word "understanding" often measure it by the size of the cheque that they are asking for.

**Mr. Ainsworth:** The Minister's reply reveals the extraordinary complacency that the Government have shown throughout their handling of foot and mouth and towards the countryside in general. I agree that there are no quick fixes, but the Government could make a start today by announcing that they will claim the £57 million compensation available under EU rules—but for just another 13 days. Does the Minister accept that failure to do so will simply confirm the widely held view that the Government have turned their back on rural Britain?

**Mr. Morley:** This demonstrates the bare-faced cheek and hypocrisy of the Opposition. The Conservative party opposed the introduction of agrimonetary compensation measures within the Council of Ministers and has been arguing for cuts in public expenditure, yet demands increases in public spending. The two do not match because there is no logic. The hon. Gentleman's question is an example of his party's empty promises and rhetoric on countryside issues.

## Foot and Mouth

7. **Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff, West): How many animals have been culled in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak; and how many of the carcases were disposed of in each country. [4674]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Margaret Beckett):** In round figures, some 2.84 million animals have been slaughtered in England and almost 326,000 in Wales. Just over 2.9 million carcases were disposed of in England and 224,000 in Wales. I can provide my hon. Friend with a more precise breakdown of those figures in writing if he wishes.

**Kevin Brennan:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does she agree that the topographical nature of Wales and the lack of rendering facilities make it particularly difficult to dispose of large numbers of carcases within Wales? Do not the figures show the benefit of Wales being a devolved nation within the United Kingdom, rather than following the selfish separatist agenda of the nationalists?

**Margaret Beckett:** My hon. Friend is entirely right—it is one of the many areas in which the benefits of devolution are demonstrable. I entirely take his point about the different circumstances and conditions that apply in Wales and it is right that it is Welsh people and the Welsh Assembly who have been able to take the decisions in that respect.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton** (Congleton): Bearing it in mind that millions of animals were slaughtered as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak, why have the Government set their face against holding a full, independent and public inquiry into its cause and handling? Such an inquiry has been called for by every rural organisation, without exception. The outbreak has cost taxpayers almost £2 billion. Surely, they have a right to learn the truth and to be told how the Government propose to prevent infection from being reimported into the United Kingdom in the near future.

**Margaret Beckett:** The hon. Lady refers to a cost to the economy of almost £2 billion. That figure is correct, but it contrasts slightly with the remarks of the hon. Member for East Surrey (Mr. Ainsworth), who suggested that the Government had not been prepared to spend any money to assist the industry.

The thrust of the hon. Lady's question, however, was about inquiries. Of course, there is a general demand for public inquiries. Whenever anybody wants an inquiry into anything, everybody always says that they want a full public inquiry. It is only very rarely, however, that people define what they mean by that term. I say to her, as I have said repeatedly in the House, that the definition is very specific, as she will know. Indeed, the arrangements for a full public inquiry are so substantial that a Prime Minister's decision is required even to establish one. That means that they tend to be extremely time consuming and costly.

The Government have proposed an inquiry structure with three separate and independent components, which means that a dedicated group of scientists will, as scientists—

**Mrs. Winterton:** Not good enough.

**Margaret Beckett:** The Royal Society, conducting a scientific investigation, is not good enough? That is absolute rubbish, and it shows the posturing and stupidity of the Opposition.

Scientists are carrying out the scientific inquiry and an independent person is carrying out the inquiry into what specifically happened in the outbreak and what can be learned for good or ill. There is a separate process, which is not clouding its discussion and decisions with consideration of what specifically happened, but looking to the future. Indeed, it is looking to the questions asked by the hon. Member for East Surrey a moment ago—the future of farming and agriculture in the United Kingdom, how can they be prosperous and how can we have a prosperous rural economy. Three separate issues are being handled separately and everyone will be acting

independently. The whole inquiry will report long before any public inquiry would have done so. That seems much better than the Opposition's posturing.

### Flood Defences (York)

8. **Hugh Bayley** (City of York): When the Environment Agency will complete its assessment of the November 2000 flood of the Yorkshire Ouse and the feasibility of strengthening the City of York's flood defences. [4675]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr. Elliot Morley):** I understand that the Environment Agency's preliminary strategic review for the River Ouse catchment is due for completion early in 2002. The findings of this strategy review and others that the agency is undertaking in the Yorkshire region will inform its plans for a prioritised programme of feasibility studies and capital works. Urgent repairs to York's defences were carried out following last year's floods.

**Hugh Bayley:** The Environment Agency's most recent estimate of the cost of reinforcing York's flood defences is about £11 million. That will require a substantial increase in the regional flood defence committee's budget, in terms both of the Government's contribution and that of the local authority. Is my hon. Friend prepared to meet me to discuss those respective contributions, as well as the possibility of revising the rules for local authority contributions? Currently, those rules allow local authorities in upland areas to veto the raising of revenue for building vital flood defences in lowland areas, especially in the Vale of York.

**Mr. Morley:** There is no doubt that those who are in charge of regional flood defences must face up to their responsibilities. I accept that, in the Yorkshire region, there is a backlog of investment in relation to long-term repairs, but I can reassure my hon. Friend that a great deal of additional resources have gone into the York defences, as well as others throughout the country. An extra £11 million was made available for this year alone, in the aftermath of last year's floods, to strengthen and repair defences. One of them was the Foss barrier, which received additional expenditure.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York): Will the Minister meet me to discuss the plight of residents who were evacuated in the vale of York and in the Rawcliffe part of the city of York? Will he press the Environment Agency to establish a pumping station? Preferably, a permanent one should be established, but at the very least a mobile station is needed to prevent the water from Blue beck and all the nasties produced by sewage treatment from coming back into those houses again this year.

**Mr. Morley:** As the hon. Lady knows, I am always willing to meet hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for City of York (Hugh Bayley), to discuss issues of concern in their constituencies relating to flood defence. In regard to the pumping station, the hon. Lady will be aware that I have met local residents and the parish council so I understand the concerns of local people. It depends on environmental factors, cost-benefit considerations, how often the pump will be used and whether there are other ways in which the area can be defended. However, I am more than willing to consider all representations and to meet hon. Members.

### Welfare-friendly Farming

9. **Colin Burgon** (Elmet): What plans she has to introduce welfare friendly farming systems. [4676]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Margaret Beckett):** Encouraging high animal welfare standards on farms is at the heart of Government policy. We have comprehensive legislation in place, supported by species-specific welfare codes. In addition, we run advisory campaigns for farmers on welfare issues and commit substantial sums to farm animal welfare research.

**Colin Burgon:** As a townie and a meat eater, I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Has she any plans to meet the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to discuss its excellent 10-point sustainable welfare-friendly farming methods? Will she be discussing with the Soil Association its advocacy of the scheme to vaccinate animals rather than continue with the horrific mass slaughter of cattle that we have seen during the current outbreak of foot and mouth disease? Does she agree that even townspeople should be involved in the widespread debate that we should be having about the future of agriculture and that we should be looking for radical changes in many of the current practices in the farming industry?

**Margaret Beckett:** My hon. Friend has asked me about two slightly different issues. I accept entirely his view that one does not have to be a vegetarian to care about animal welfare, or indeed to live in the countryside. I accept his points about the very good work carried out on several fronts by the RSPCA.

My hon. Friend referred to vaccination rather than slaughter. Throughout the recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease, the Government have continually kept under review and consideration whether vaccination can play a constructive role and whether it would assist. I remind him that it does not seem to be widely reported or understood that at present it is the approach not only of the British Government but right across the European Union, including Holland, for example, that vaccination is undertaken as a prelude to slaughter and not instead of it.

These are difficult issues that must be considered. Together with the Dutch Government, we are sponsoring a conference later in the autumn to discuss these policy issues, but it is sadly not the case that there is a lovely, simple animal welfare-friendly option that would solve all the problems and would be easy to implement at any stage in any outbreak, let alone the current one.

**Mr. Colin Breed** (South-East Cornwall): We welcome very much the Government's animal welfare-friendly plans, but can the Secretary of State confirm that any costs associated with such plans will not fall upon British agriculture, rendering it more uncompetitive than it already is against its European competitors?

**Margaret Beckett:** Yet another plea from a different quarter for more money from a party that claims to be

concerned about the state of the economy. Of course we recognise that there may be costs associated with these measures and we do our best to make sure that what high standards require is adequately assessed, but we do not go over the top. The approach that we adopt—and I am slightly surprised to hear that it might not be the approach of the Liberal Democrats—is to seek to ensure that higher animal welfare standards are observed not only here, but across the European Union. We consider that that is the right course of action to make sure that people are competing on the same fair basis rather than going for the cheapest option and accepting the damage to animal welfare that that might involve.

## Fishing (Essex)

10. **Mr. David Amess** (Southend, West): What recent representations she has received on the impact of the total allowable catch on fishing communities in Essex. [4677]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr. Elliot Morley):** I regularly receive representations on all fishing issues from all over the country.

**Mr. Amess:** Is the Minister aware that Leigh-on-Sea fishermen feel that if the cuts continue it will be uneconomic to go to sea and they would like levels to be underpinned? If he cannot achieve that, will he consider supporting our bid for European funding for a local hatchery, which would help to conserve stocks and offer alternative job opportunities?

**Mr. Morley:** I realise that there is pressure on inshore fishermen when there are stock reductions because of pressure on quota, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is underpinning on, for example, sole, which will benefit his local inshore fishermen. I understand that my officials have met his constituents, who are proposing schemes under this budget, and that they will give advice and pursue the matter.

# Rural Recovery (Cumbria)

12.30 pm

**Mr. Speaker:** We now come to written question No. 8.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

### Rural Recovery (Cumbria)

**Mr. Eric Martlew** (Carlisle): To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when Lord Haskins will make his report on rural recovery in Cumbria; and if she will make a statement. [9471]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Margaret Beckett):** First, let me apologise. I hope not to take up too much of the House's time, but, in view of the many strictures about announcements being made outside the House rather than inside, I thought it right to try to make it known to the House that the Government welcome the report by Lord Haskins that was published this morning. We are grateful to Lord Haskins for his work in consulting stakeholders in Cumbria and other areas affected by the foot and mouth disease outbreak, and for producing a lucid and thoughtful report. We shall respond to all his recommendations shortly.

As the House may know, Lord Haskins' main recommendation stated that affected small businesses needed help to see them through the winter. I am pleased to be able to announce an extension of the business recovery fund in the worst-affected regions. Some £14 million of central Government funding has been made available, plus £10 million from reprioritisation within the regional development agencies' budgets. That will provide an extra £24 million for rural recovery through grants to individual businesses and other measures such as tourism promotion. We shall consider later in the year whether it is possible to provide more.

I apologise to the Opposition for not having been able to give them more notice of this announcement; but, as I have said, I thought it right to share the information with the House at the earliest opportunity.

**Mr. Martlew:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for taking the question. I also thank the Secretary of State for requesting it.

I am impressed by the report, which reaches conclusions that I consider essential in relation to Cumbria. We have had a major problem; the county's economy has gone into recession, although it will recover well. Lord Haskins makes 12 recommendations for the short term. The fifth is that £40 million should be made available for business recovery in the areas concerned, so I am rather disappointed that my right hon. Friend has announced only £24 million. Will she discuss with the Treasury whether the extra money is available? Without extra money, and extra money soon, good businesses in Cumbria and throughout the country that have been affected by foot and mouth will go bankrupt.

**Margaret Beckett:** I entirely accept what my hon. Friend says about the problems experienced in Cumbria, which he and many other Members representing the county have frequently drawn to the House's attention. I also accept that he is a little disappointed that I cannot provide at once the full sum identified by Lord Haskins—although I think that he will find that Lord Haskins, along with others, will feel that this is very much a step in the right direction.

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth** (East Surrey): This is a confused and innovative way of making an announcement to the House. I understand that no copies of the Haskins report are available in the Vote Office, although copies were made available to the media before DEFRA questions. I have managed to obtain a copy by dint of ingenuity, but it is not possible to ask questions and read at the same time. This is not an easy situation for any Member. If the Haskins report is as important as the Government have made out, surely it merited a full and proper statement to the House rather than the strange procedure that is taking place. We will, of course, study the report with great care.

Can the right hon. Lady say how much of the new money that she has announced is, in fact, new money? Does she accept that the Cumbria foot and mouth taskforce estimated that at least £150 million of help was needed in the county? Lord Haskins recommends considerably less, and I understand that she wants to cut the amount further. Will she comment on that?

Will the right hon. Lady act on the recommendation that an extra £40 million should be put into the business recovery fund, half of which is due to Cumbria? Can that amount be provided swiftly? Many businesses in Cumbria simply will not survive the winter without the extra help that is needed so urgently. When will she further discuss the matter and the recommendations with her right hon. Friends in the Treasury, and when will she report? I note that she says that she will report shortly, but rural Britain and Cumbria in particular would like a clear date.

Farmers in Cumbria and elsewhere depend on livestock markets. Will the right hon. Lady reaffirm her support for livestock markets, despite the report's recommendation that they need to be better regulated? Are not the main opponents of livestock markets the big food processing companies such as Northern Foods, which is, of course, run by Lord Haskins?

**Margaret Beckett:** I welcome all members of the Opposition Front-Bench team to their new responsibilities, which I should have done previously. I apologise to them.

I fear that the hon. Gentleman is mistaken in thinking that this procedure is innovative—it has been adopted before. I also say to him and the House that, had there been a question on the Order Paper to which I could have attached the announcement, I would certainly have done so. *[Interruption.]* The shadow Leader of the House groans, but if he reads the Order Paper he will find that even his ingenuity would have been taxed by working the announcement into any of the questions that were before us.

I simply say to the hon. Member for East Surrey (Mr. Ainsworth) that this is not a Government report; it is Lord Haskins' report to the Government. It is available in the Library, and if it is not yet available in the Vote Office I regret that.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions. It is of course true that other taskforces and bodies have made a range of recommendations, all of which run to hundreds

of millions of pounds. My understanding is that one of Lord Haskins' observations is that those making such recommendations should be more realistic.

When I say shortly, I mean shortly. I shall pursue a discussion on all the various recommendations that are made. The recommendation on livestock markets is one that we shall examine when we consider the report. Of course I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman as he seeks to assimilate what he has been asked to comment on while devising his questions: Labour Members had years of practice at that.

**Mr. David Drew** (Stroud): I very much welcome the report, which has come not a moment too soon. I am aware that it concentrates on Cumbria, but many other parts of the—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Let the hon. Gentleman put his question.

**Mr. Drew:** The report relates to other parts of the country, even though Cumbria was apparently the worst affected. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that some dates by which businesses must appeal for help can be extended, given that certain ones have passed? Will she also consider ways in which her ministerial team can go out and talk to farmers about how to move towards a more sustainable food policy?

**Margaret Beckett:** On my hon. Friend's last point, not only my team but the policy commission are engaged in that debate. I understand his points about businesses. One aspect that has led us to respond so speedily to the publication of the report is an understanding of the number of businesses that are in the queue, so to speak, and that have been affected by the existing position.

I did not deal with the point made by the hon. Member for East Surrey about whether the money is new. It is all money that will be newly available to people in such circumstances. I find the pretence that money that is available for the purposes for which it is to be used is somehow not available to be artificial and ridiculous.

**Mr. Tim Collins** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Cumbria has been through a horrendous nine months and I am afraid that the Government's reaction today is yet another example of too little, too late. May I press the Secretary of State specifically on Lord Haskins' recommendation that the extension of the amnesty for business rate and VAT payments should run to April next year? Will she have urgent discussions with the Treasury on that recommendation? If those bills are presented in the next few months, a large number of businesses will go bankrupt.

Will the right hon. Lady comment on the extraordinary statement in Lord Haskins' report that Government support should be provided only to those businesses that deserve to survive? Will she clarify exactly which businesses, in the Government's view, deserve to survive? I can tell her that in my constituency and throughout the county of Cumbria a large number of businesses that deserved to survive are already bust.

**Margaret Beckett:** The hon. Gentleman is entirely correct and, naturally, I accept that the situation in Cumbria has been terrible. Members throughout the House recognise that. I take on board his further points about the extension of the amnesty. He will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Rural Affairs and I have been discussing and will continue to discuss these issues. I take this opportunity to tell the House that the rural taskforce report, on which my right hon. Friend has been engaged, will also be published later this afternoon and made available in the House.

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones** (Cardiff, Central): We have just heard that the total contribution of agriculture to our GDP is worth £5 billion. Is the Secretary of State aware that *The Economist* calculates that cannabis dealing in the United Kingdom is worth more than £1 billion? Has Lord Haskins considered the enormous contribution that could be made by legalising cannabis and producing the crop in the United Kingdom, which would be perfectly possible—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. That is far too wide of the question.

**Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): I welcome any circumstance that requires Ministers to make a statement about publications that have been issued outside. It is unfortunate, however, that it was not possible to have a full statement.

What does Lord Haskins' report, as it applies to Cumbria, imply for the rest of England and Wales in terms of compensation requirements, and what recommendations will flow from that? Given that the rural taskforce has also reported today to the Prime Minister—I understand that the report has just been published—can the Secretary of State say anything about that report, which I understand calls for more extensive support for businesses across the rural community? May we have a debate in the House about both reports, rather than a hurried statement tacked on to the end of Question Time?

**Margaret Beckett:** With respect, the Government have tried, without unduly disrupting business, to ensure that the announcement of our reaction to the report has been made in the House. The breakdown and the justification for it are issues that we can consider at greater length. As for the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate on the matter, it has been heard by the Leader of the House. Indeed, the rural taskforce report looks more widely and more at the medium and longer term. Nothing that I have said today precludes consideration of what might be the right steps to take in the medium and longer term. The House and the Government will return to those issues over time.

**Tony Cunningham** (Workington): I welcome the report and the money that is being provided. Will the Secretary of State ensure that local people are brought into discussions on the implementation of the report? We want to make sure that the new money is spent as efficiently as possible because the people of Cumbria have truly suffered over the past nine months.

**Margaret Beckett:** I entirely take my hon. Friend's point. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Rural Affairs advises me that one of the key recommendations in the rural taskforce report as he sees it concerns teamwork, and clearly that involves local people. It is right to give

*[Margaret Beckett]*

careful consideration to the best, most effective use of the money. It is not for me to define Lord Haskins' terms for him, but I suspect that is what he meant when he talked about businesses that deserve money.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): Does the right hon. Lady accept that Lord Haskins is not the most popular man with farmers? He is not a particularly successful farmer and his company certainly is not friendly to the farming industry. Does it come well from a man such as Lord Haskins to hector livestock farmers who work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 12 months a year? Does she further accept that the subsidies mentioned by Members during Question Time today go to the consumer, not the farmer? Unless farmers are there, the great land that we represent and which people take for granted will not be maintained. Farmers must produce from their land to maintain it for the benefit of the country.

**Margaret Beckett:** The hon. Gentleman will have been in the Chamber and heard the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Paddy Tipping) indicating that we all recognise not only the direct contribution that agriculture and farming make to the economy, but their contribution to the rural landscape, which is a key issue for tourism.

As for the hon. Gentleman's contention that Lord Haskins is not popular in the countryside, I think that a succession of Agriculture Ministers would like to know how that is to be achieved.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): The present animal markets are wasteful, inefficient, cruel to animals and accelerate the spread of animal diseases. During this crisis some farmers have sold their animals via video links, and Lord Haskins rightly says that the best way of conducting such sales is via the internet, which not only avoids suffering for animals, as they do not have to travel so far, but is far cheaper. Most of all, however, such a system would avoid the spread of disease, as animals do not come into contact with each other. Is not that recommendation, like the rest of the report, far-sighted? Lord Haskins rightly says that aquaculture, bio-farming and fuel farming are more prosperous and employ more people than traditional agriculture. They could also create an industry that has a far better future, without subsidies.

**Margaret Beckett:** People may or may not like what Lord Haskins has to say, but it is generally recognised that he is always a thoughtful and stimulating contributor to debate. My hon. Friend has drawn on some of the ideas that are in the public domain and being discussed. They are also very much ideas that we hope that the policy commission will consider and take into account when it makes its own recommendations.

**Mr. Michael Jack** (Fylde): I recognise the very special impact that foot and mouth had on Cumbria, but other parts of the country suffered as well. People in those areas will look carefully at the conclusions of Lord Haskins' report and note the additional resources going to Cumbria. Does the right hon. Lady have any plans to apply those lessons, and further resources, to other parts of the country?

**Margaret Beckett:** I should make it plain that it is not the intention that all that money will go to Cumbria. Clearly, however, the flavour of what Lord Haskins says is that many of the problems have been more severe there. Of course the Government recognise that the problems are more widespread.

**Lawrie Quinn** (Scarborough and Whitby): My right hon. Friend will appreciate that, with 134 cases in North Yorkshire, many of which have been in its two national parks, the impact on our sub-regional rural economy—particularly in my constituency in the Esk valley—was much the same as the impact in Cumbria. Will she confirm that North Yorkshire will share in substantial support to deal with that impact? Will the national park authorities, with their expertise, be used to tackle the problems of overstocking, especially in the sheep sector, that face many of my constituents?

**Margaret Beckett:** We are listening to the views and input of the various authorities on the future direction of policy. We shall also examine the distribution of the money. I am sure that not everyone will be satisfied, and that everyone will think that there should be more for their area, but I hope that people will recognise that it is a contribution.

I should also like to share with the House a piece of information of which I have just been reminded. Lord Haskins was in fact recommended as the person to conduct the study by the National Farmers Union in Cumbria.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Those of us who have not had access to the papers rather assumed that the £24 million that the right hon. Lady has announced was specifically targeted on Cumbria. If that is not so, will she make it clear? At the beginning of this debate, the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) rightly raised the essential issue of the quantum of compensation. Have we heard her last word on that subject? Can we tempt her to keep open the possibility of increasing the sum if demands increase in other parts of the United Kingdom? Specifically, what new money will be made available in south-east and south-west Scotland as a result of her announcement today?

**Margaret Beckett:** I accept that it is not easy for hon. Members to follow the precise nuances of announcements. As I said, however, the money is indeed for Cumbria and for other areas; the hon. Gentleman is right about that. Nevertheless, I anticipate that the lion's share of the money will go to Cumbria, for all the reasons that hon. Members understand and have identified. I also accept that there will be continuing concerns in other areas, and that the Government will come under continuing pressure to see whether it is possible, in our difficult circumstances, to do more.

## Business of the House

12.50 pm

**Mr. Eric Forth** (Bromley and Chislehurst): May we please have the business for next week?

**The President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Robin Cook):** The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 22 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the Homelessness Bill.

TUESDAY 23 OCTOBER—Opposition Day [2nd Allotted Day]. Until about 10 o'clock there will be a debate entitled "Conduct of Ministers in the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions" on an Opposition motion.

WEDNESDAY 24 OCTOBER—Second Reading of the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill.

THURSDAY 25 OCTOBER—Opposition Day [3rd Allotted Day 1st part]. There will be a debate on a motion. Subject to be announced. Motion on the Social Security (Jobcentre plus Interviews) Regulations 2001.

Motion to take note of European Document No. 14174/00 relating to the European Food Authority.

FRIDAY 26 OCTOBER—Private Members' Bills. The provisional business for the following week will be as follows:

MONDAY 29 OCTOBER—Second Reading of the Adoption Bill.

TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER—Second Reading of the Proceeds of Crime Bill.

WEDNESDAY 31 OCTOBER—Opposition Day [4th Allotted Day]. There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject to be announced.

THURSDAY 1 NOVEMBER—I intend to keep that date free at this stage; it may be appropriate for a further debate on international terrorism.

FRIDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Private Members' Bills.

I know that Members will welcome early notice of recess dates. It may therefore be for the convenience of the House to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House rise for the Christmas recess at the end of business on Wednesday 19 December, or Thursday 20 December, until Tuesday 8 January.

**Mr. Forth:** I thank the Leader of the House for giving us the business for the next two weeks—and not only that; knowing how keen his colleagues always are to get away from this place as much as possible, I suspect that they, in particular, will be grateful for the announcement of the Christmas recess.

I also thank the right hon. Gentleman for his announcement that he wants to make provision on Thursday 1 November for a possible further debate on terrorism. On Monday 15 October, he said:

"we will have repeated debates on the issue of terrorism . . . Whenever appropriate, we will return to it"—[*Official Report*, 15 October 2001; Vol. 372, c. 975.]

I am sure that everyone in the House will welcome that. I welcome the fact that the Government have already given proper time for the subject to be debated, and I hope that the Leader of the House will find it possible to give us as much reasonable notice as possible that it is the Government's firm intention to have that debate on 1 November. We want to avoid any last-minute decisions or scrambles for debates, especially on such an important issue. I am sure that Members on both sides of the House will want the maximum possible notice of such a debate.

With regard to next Tuesday's debate, I hope that the Leader of the House will be gratified that we took his advice. In the same column of *Hansard* it is recorded that he said that if I wished to return to the issue of Ministers, the civil service and special advisers, the Government would be delighted to debate it robustly with us. I followed his advice. Effectively, he asked us for a debate, and we have decided to give it to him. I hope that he will enjoy it—and I hope that his colleague the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions will enjoy it equally; that remains to be seen.

Finally, may I press the right hon. Gentleman on a point raised by his hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, South-East (Dr. Iddon), who on Monday asked what had happened to the debate on drugs. That has disappeared, and this Friday we now have a debate on cleaner fuels. The right hon. Gentleman gave a lot of explanations about how busy the Home Office was and how difficult it would be for Home Office Ministers to find time, and so on. He then said:

"I hope to see the debate reinstated at an appropriate time when the Home Office can appropriately find priority for it."—[*Official Report*, 15 October 2001; Vol. 372, c. 975.]

I will not say that that was waffle; that would be unfair, but I hope that the Leader of House can give a more positive indication on whether we can return to the important subject of drugs, which I dare say some in the House, even some of his hon. Friends, think is marginally more important than cleaner fuel.

**Mr. Cook:** I welcome the clear indication from the right hon. Gentleman and Conservative Back Benchers that they will be happy to be here at Christmas. The recess that I announced is clearly subject to the progress of business, but I take note of the fact that Conservative Members are willing to be here at Christmas should that be required.

I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's welcome for the day that we have set aside for a debate on terrorism. I will, of course, confirm that date at next Thursday's business questions. That will give us seven days' warning, and I am sure that that will be satisfactory for the House. Should we change our plans, I am sure that he will be the first to know.

I think that I speak for all Labour Members when I say that I am grateful for the fact that the party that thought up the privatisation of the railways and devised the structure of Railtrack now proposes to have a full-day's debate about the disastrous consequences for Railtrack and the travelling public. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions was faced with a choice: to pour more taxpayers' money down the black hole of an insolvent company, or to create a not-for-profit company in which money would go first to the travelling public rather than to shareholders. We chose to put passengers first. The Conservative party would obviously choose to put shareholders first, but I have not the slightest doubt what the travelling public would vote for.

*[Mr. Cook]*

I explained to the House on Monday that the sole reason for deferring the debate on drugs was that the Home Office is, at present, introducing three new Bills in response to the events of 11 September. The first will be an emergency anti-terrorism Bill, and I hope that all Members of reason would agree that the Home Office should be able to give priority to that issue at this time. However, I fully accept the case for a debate on drugs; that is why we found time for it in the first place. We shall return to it whenever we can.

On Monday, I congratulated the right hon. Gentleman on his appointment. I now congratulate the right hon. Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight), who is sitting in a suitably modest position, on joining the team of the shadow Leader of the House. I hope that, for his own sake, the right hon. Member for East Yorkshire will find the experience more congenial than his predecessor did, who quit after only 30 days in the post.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Minister for Industry and Energy will make a statement about his predecessor's decision on an equal pay claim for all the canteen workers in the coalfields? Is my right hon. Friend aware that about 2,500 of those workers have not qualified for the money? Will he draw that fact to the attention of the Chancellor of Exchequer and explain to him that we need extra money for all the canteen workers who were left out of the agreement and who must be paid? In my area, those who belonged to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers were paid, while those at Bolsover colliery who stayed loyal to the National Union of Mineworkers during the pit strike were left off the list. That state of affairs has been repeated across all the coalfields and in many constituencies represented by Labour Members. We want a statement or, better still, payment pretty sharp.

**Mr. Cook:** My hon. Friend states his case with his characteristic robustness. I will certainly draw his remarks to the attention of the appropriate Ministers. It is long overdue that the events of that period were put behind us. Everyone should be treated on an equal and fair basis.

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (North Cornwall): May I reinforce the plea that my colleagues have just made for a debate on the rural crisis? Many Members on both sides of the House think that such a debate is long overdue.

Will the Leader of the House examine the allocation of time for questions to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs? In the Question Time that we have just completed, it took us more than half an hour to reach a question on farming and agriculture and, indeed, no fishing questions were reached at all. [HON. MEMBERS: "One was."] I apologise to the House; one fishing question was reached at the very end.

Previously there was an arrangement by which a large Department—the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions—allocated some time to environmental questions and some time to transport questions. May we put that procedure in place again? Will the Leader of the House and the House authorities consider that possibility so that agriculture and rural affairs are not kicked into touch, as they were today?

The Leader of the House will recall—indeed, he may still have the bruises—his experience when the House decided that appointments to Select Committees should be more transparent, should be seen to be more transparent and should be more open to influence by Members rather than the so-called usual channels. Does he expect to be able to make an announcement on that, as a result of recommendations from the Modernisation Committee, within the two-week period that he announced today or very shortly? He will be aware that there are vacancies on Select Committees and, he may wish to make a statement about how he wishes to approach the task of filling them.

**Mr. Cook:** I am aware of, and sympathetic to, the pressure for a debate on the countryside. I hope that we will be able to find time for it at an appropriate moment.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about questions to DEFRA, and I am alive to the fact that I am addressing a Chamber that is mostly composed of Members who were here for DEFRA questions, and with whom his point might resonate. I shall discuss the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, but there is no time available with which to widen the envelope; whether or not the envelope can be reshuffled is a matter on which I must seek the advice of my colleagues in the Department.

I am pleased to report to the House that the Modernisation Committee had a good first discussion on appointments to Select Committees yesterday morning. I hope that we will be able to make good progress in reaching an agreement on an alternative method of bringing nominations before the House. If so, we may be able to bring a report to the House in November. In the meantime, I am conscious of the need to fill the vacancies that are arising, which is one of the reasons for my desire to make progress as quickly as possible.

**Geraldine Smith** (Morecambe and Lunesdale): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the wholesale redundancies, outsourcing and sell-offs currently being planned by Consignia, which could jeopardise its ability to meet its universal service obligations, destroy the morale of employees and plunge this country's postal services into a terrible mess. In view of that, may we have an early debate on the future of the Post Office?

**Mr. Cook:** I am very much aware of the position to which my hon. Friend draws my attention, and I fully sympathise with the concerns arising from the announcement. My hon. Friend will be aware that the announcement is only the start of a process of consultation and discussion, and I am sure that the House will have opportunities to ventilate the concerns of individual Members as that proceeds. These are, of course, matters for the company, not the Government, and I would not wish to suggest that Ministers will interfere in the way in which the company addresses the important task of ensuring that the Post Office remains in profit.

**Mr. Michael Fallon** (Sevenoaks): Will the Leader of the House consider the case for a debate on Lord Haskins' other report, published yesterday, the annual report of the better

regulation taskforce? Does he accept Lord Haskins's conclusion that the present system of regulation is "excessively centralised"

and

"inherently autocratic, inflexible and remote"?

**Mr. Cook:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government have expressed concern about the speed that is required in deregulation, which is why, after all, we passed the reform Act in the previous Session. I am pleased to say that since we did so, no fewer than 50 different areas have come within the scope of the Act and are being acted on as we speak. We will continue to make all due progress.

**Mr. Mike Wood** (Batley and Spen): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the gas explosion in my constituency last December, which killed two constituents, Alvin and Shirley Sykes, as they slept. The explosion was subject to an immediate investigation by the Health and Safety Executive, but 10 months later we are still waiting for the report to be published, and there is no evidence that publication is imminent. Will my right hon. Friend give some reassurance to the people of Batley, not least the Sykes family, who need to put that dreadful experience behind them, by arranging an immediate and urgent statement to the House about the full circumstances of the explosion and an explanation of why we are being denied the report?

**Mr. Cook:** My hon. Friend raises an issue that is important to his constituency, and particularly to the family of the constituents whom he named. He makes his point with great dignity and force. I will draw his comments to the attention of the Health and Safety Executive and encourage it to release the report as quickly as possible.

**Sir George Young** (North-West Hampshire): The Government have made it clear that over the next few weeks the House will deal with a substantial volume of additional legislation on terrorism, much of which will be taken on the Floor. Does he agree that if the House is to perform its scrutiny role adequately, this necessarily means that some of the other items in what was already an ambitious programme will have to be dropped?

**Mr. Cook:** I do not anticipate a problem with timetabling up to the next recess, which I have announced. As for the future, we will review the matter when we get there. Let us be clear: there has been a change, not only in our security environment, but in international affairs. Both the House and the Government would be subject to immense criticism if we were to say that we do not have the flexibility to respond, to introduce and scrutinise legislation and to pass it with the expedition required for emergency legislation. I look forward to the co-operation of all quarters of the House in achieving that objective.

**David Cairns** (Greenock and Inverclyde): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate on the looming crisis in the airline industry, brought about as a direct result of actions on 11 September? He will be aware that the American Government and other European Governments are giving strong support to their national airlines. It is a fiercely competitive industry and global market. The debate will also allow the Government to address the central problems that face the industry—the difficulty of insurance, the increased costs for extra security at airports and the provision of compensation for when the planes were grounded.

**Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): And also about the absurdity of terminal 5, which should be stopped.

**Mr. Cook:** I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Andrew Mackinlay), although I fear that that is not in order.

The Government have responded to the crisis in the aviation industry and underwritten provisions, especially in relation to insurance to the end of the month. We are in consultation with the aviation industry to consider what further support may be appropriate and consistent with our European obligations, which also apply to our partners. I note that the relevant Department will be up for questions next week and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Inverclyde (David Cairns) and others may want to ventilate that issue then.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House will know from his former incarnation that problems arise if countries do things in different ways. Will it be possible before the next debate on terrorism for the Foreign Secretary to discover how far those who have joined in the coalition are working to defeat international terrorism? Belgium is not handing over information to the Americans and someone in the Republic of Ireland keeps his own army council, with illegally held weapons, against the constitution.

**Mr. Cook:** The hon. Gentleman makes a point that he and his hon. Friends might want to reiterate in the full-day debate that I have announced for two weeks hence. One reason why we held the Justice and Home Affairs Council immediately after 11 September and are anxious to introduce emergency legislation to implement our decisions is to ensure that all European Union member states work together with everyone else to ensure that we crack down on terrorism and co-operate with each other to bring to justice those who are guilty of terrorism.

**Fiona Mactaggart** (Slough): More than 100 Labour Members and some Opposition Members have demonstrated their unease about the Wakeham proposals by signing early-day motion 226:

*[That this House supports the democratic principle that any revised Second Chamber of Parliament should be wholly or substantially elected.]*

In view of that, will my right hon. Friend agree to consult further before he introduces legislation based on those proposals, which do not include a substantial democratic element for any elected second Chamber?

**Mr. Cook:** I have noted the early-day motion to which my hon. Friend refers and see that she tabled it. I am happy to say that there will be a consultation document before legislation is introduced. We gave that commitment in the Queen's Speech and it is how we will proceed.

**Mrs. Angela Browning** (Tiverton and Honiton): The Leader of the House said that there has been an obvious

*[Mrs. Angela Browning]*

change in the domestic security environment. May we have a statement next week on civil defence? There seem to be some mixed messages from Ministers, including the Prime Minister. When asked specific questions in television interviews, they respond that they do not want to create alarm, which is understandable, and we received some information in the margins of Health questions earlier this week, but the approach is in stark contrast to the attitude to public information in the United States. Will a Minister come to the Dispatch Box to answer questions on that issue? We are receiving questions in our mailbag and I have some questions that I should like to ask. The House deserves a statement and an opportunity to question Ministers without revealing too much that would undermine security.

**Mr. Cook:** There will be an opportunity to question Ministers at the Department of Health. In fairness to the Government, we should recall that we began on Monday with a statement from the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which dwelt on the internal security situation in Britain.

The hon. Lady puts her finger on a dilemma that we must try to get right. We are aware of no specific threat to the UK, but at the same time we must recognise that in the present environment some people may wish to execute an attack on the UK if they have the opportunity and means to do so. Although we may be aware of no specific threat, we must be constantly alert and vigorous in safeguarding our people, and take all possible measures to do so. I am sure that we will debate the balance of those considerations as we proceed with emergency legislation.

**David Taylor** (North-West Leicestershire): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate on the future of the United Kingdom hospice movement, which is under severe financial pressure? Sue Ryder Care expects to close four of its hospices throughout the country, including one at Staunton Harold hall in my constituency, about which a 20,000-signature petition was presented to No. 10 Downing street just last week. Is not the hospice movement, with the day, respite and terminal illness care that it offers and the dignity that it gives so many of our citizens in their final days, of sufficient importance for finance to be more heavily sourced from the national health service and not dependent on the vicissitudes of voluntary contributions?

**Mr. Cook:** My hon. Friend raises a very important issue. Having previously held the health portfolio in opposition, I fully understand and greatly value the work of the hospice movement, which can provide particularly sensitive care at a very difficult time for both patients and relatives, who immensely appreciate its services. This Government certainly want the hospice movement to prosper, and I shall draw my hon. Friend's comments to the attention of my colleagues at the Department of Health.

**Mr. Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland): May I associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) on the conduct of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs questions, particularly relating to the fishing industry? In the Shetland part of my constituency, the fishing industry accounts for 20 to 25 per cent. of our economy. My constituents would consider a system that allows for less than two minutes' questioning of Ministers in two weeks next to useless. I therefore ask whether time will be found for a statement or a proper debate on the crisis of stock levels in the North sea and the need, highlighted in a paper produced today by the World Wildlife Fund, for money to be provided by the Treasury for short to medium-term aid for the fishing industry and the white fish fleet in particular.

**Mr. Cook:** I note that the hon. Gentleman has seconded the suggestion made from the Liberal Democrat Benches by the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), and I fully understand and am aware of the importance of the fishing industry to his constituency. I am delighted that this occasion has given me the opportunity to put that on the record in the way in which Question Time did not.

**John Robertson** (Glasgow, Anniesland): My right hon. Friend will be aware of demerger plans concerning mmo$_2$, which is part of BT. I should register an interest as an ex-BT employee of 30 years, a small shareholder in the company and a member of Connect, the management and professionals union. My right hon. Friend will also be aware that, if carried, the proposals could damage not only BT but the UK's communications infrastructure. Is he aware that the trade unions representing BT's employees are firmly against any demerger on the grounds not only of possible job losses but of national interest? Will he arrange a debate in which we can discuss what might happen if the demerger goes ahead?

**Mr. Cook:** I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate, but I am aware of the issue and I fully understand the anxiety to which it has given rise. The matter is essentially for BT as a company, but I hope that, in taking it forward, it will fully consult and listen to its employees and consider carefully whether the division of debt in the demerger is fair to both parts.

**Chris Grayling** (Epsom and Ewell): The Leader of the House may be aware that in early September the Strategic Rail Authority presented to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions an analysis of Central Railway's proposal to build a freight line from the channel tunnel to the north-west. As the Leader of the House may be aware, the proposal has caused considerable anxiety across many parts of south-east England, so I should be grateful if he would invite the Secretary of State to attend the House at the earliest possible date to make a statement on the proposals and their viability.

**Mr. Cook:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State needs no further encouragement from me to appear in the House next week—he will be involved in Question Time and a debate next Tuesday, and I am sure that that will furnish the hon. Gentleman with adequate opportunity to air his concerns.

**Mr. Colin Challen** (Morley and Rothwell): Since 11 September, all hon. Members have welcomed the opportunities that we have had to discuss, in a very sombre and respectful way, the consequences of

international terrorism, and we welcome the further opportunities to do so that have been announced, but is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing debate outside the House about the long-term consequences of the events of 11 September? We may be dismayed that such action has to be taken now, but beyond the fight in Afghanistan, there is a war against poverty and so on in the wider world. We may also be dismayed by a recent report, which we may have all received, from the Jubilee Plus campaign about the effect of poverty in the heavily indebted poor countries. That also needs to be debated, and perhaps a whole day should be set aside to debate that wider context.

**Mr. Cook:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that the events of 11 September will have long-lived and wide repercussions, and I share with him the hope that, as a consequence, there will be a greater international consensus on bearing down on world poverty, which is, of course, one of the breeding grounds of the fanaticism that can produce terrorism. This Government have a very good record on taking the initiative in the G8 and elsewhere on relieving the debt of the poorest countries. We shall continue to provide that leadership, and I hope that we can now build a bigger alliance to lift the burden of debt from those countries that sometimes find that they pay more in interest on debt than they spend on their schools and hospitals.

**Mr. John Redwood** (Wokingham): Will the Leader of the House try to ensure that the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions can tell the House, either in the debate next week or in an early statement, how much public money will be made available to the new Railtrack, when decisions will be made about investment projects that have been put on ice by Railtrack's going into administration and when we will know the details of the successor company? In my constituency, we were well advanced with plans for a new station, but we now have no idea where Railtrack is coming from, who is running it, how much money it has and whether it can get on with modernising the railways. We will need answers from the Secretary of State, and I hope that the Leader of the House will ensure that the time will not be wasted next week.

**Mr. Cook:** I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will reflect on the right hon. Gentleman's observations and consider what weight he should attach to them in his speech. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will also favour us with a speech on Tuesday and explain how, while sitting in the Cabinet that privatised the railway industry, he helped to devise the system of railway administration. The system was thought up by that Cabinet and is part of the Railways Act 1993, so perhaps he could share with us the answers that Conservative Members had in mind in 1993.

**Mr. Gwyn Prosser** (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend find an opportunity to hold an urgent debate on encouraging the recruitment and retention of general practitioners? Has he had a chance to study the two surveys published yesterday? Is he aware of the growing shortage of GPs across the country, especially in east Kent? Yesterday, the prospect arose of one large practice in my constituency shedding 500 patients from its roll. That is driving us into a dangerous position, so will he seriously consider holding a debate on those important matters?

**Mr. Cook:** My hon. Friend makes his point about the situation in his constituency, and I understand why he is concerned. On the broader, national picture, I have to tell him that there are now more GPs than ever before and that the survey to which he refers discovered that the clear majority of those GPs believe that health care to their patients has improved under this Government.

**Sir Sydney Chapman** (Chipping Barnet): If not next week, then at an early date, will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on a matter that is assuming some urgency—the proper parliamentary scrutiny of the new European security and defence project? Given the need for the ESDP closely to ally its work with NATO, does he agree that it would be far better if the scrutiny at European level were conducted by a reconstituted Assembly of the Western European Union rather than by the European Parliament or the European Union, because some members of the EU are not members of NATO and some members of NATO are not members of the EU?

**Mr. Cook:** I would suggest that, in the light of the events of 11 September, we should try to make every possible progress on European security to make sure, for example, that we can guarantee stability in our own continent, especially in south-east Europe and the Balkans, so that we never again see in Europe the emergence of the kind of pressures that gave rise to the attack on the World Trade Centre. Of course, it is important that European security and defence policy is democratically accountable, but I strongly suggest—the Government have maintained this position since the start of the process—that democratic accountability should be to the national Parliaments, including this one.

**Mr. Neil Gerrard** (Walthamstow): Does the Leader of the House recall that the Government published their consultation paper on a national strategy for sexual health, including HIV, in July? Having waited two years for that paper, it was disappointing that it was published in the recess, which meant that there was no possibility of a statement or debate. A lot of people are interested in the issues raised by the paper. Will he see if time can be found for a debate, if not immediately, then before the consultation period ends?

**Mr. Cook:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's question and know of his own interest through the all-party parliamentary group on AIDS. I am aware of the concern about the time taken to produce the report; indeed, it was raised with me in business questions before the recess. I therefore hope that my hon. Friend is indulgent of the fact that the report was published, albeit in the recess. It is important that we do not propose that all Government work be suspended during the recess, and it is vital that the Government are held to account for any major statement. I shall bear in mind his request for a debate; I cannot give any promises, but I shall certainly take it on board, along with the many other requests that I receive.

**Mr. Andrew MacKay** (Bracknell): Ahead of next Tuesday's debate, if we are going to restore confidence in

*[Mr. Andrew MacKay]*

public and political life, is it not essential that the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions comes to the Dispatch Box and announces that he has at last sacked his special adviser, which is what the overwhelming majority of people in the country expect? Also, because of the delay in sacking, the Secretary of State should now say that he is considering his own position.

**Mr. Cook:** There is absolutely nothing new left to say about the case of Jo Moore and the right hon. Gentleman has not found anything. The issue is not whether or not Jo Moore made a mistake; she herself said that she made a terrible error of judgment. The issue is whether someone's career and livelihood should be ended because of a single mistake. That may be how Conservative Members treat their staff, but it is certainly not how they behaved when they were Ministers. Had they resigned after making one mistake, they would not have lasted 18 days, never mind 18 years.

**Mrs. Ann Cryer** (Keighley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, 12 months on from the devastating floods of last autumn, it is appropriate to have a debate to examine their impact and consider where we are now as a result and what we have been able to achieve? For instance, 300 homes in my constituency were devastated at Stockbridge. If we had a debate, one of the many things that I would like to raise is the fact that the Environment Agency will not start work to improve flood defences on the River Aire at Stockbridge until next summer. Meanwhile, many of my constituents are extremely worried every time that there is heavy rain. In addition, as a result of the laggardly behaviour of one or two insurance firms, several of my constituents have still not been able to move back into their homes 12 months on.

**Mr. Cook:** I am fully aware of the seriousness of the issue, particularly in my hon. Friend's constituency, and know that my colleagues in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are following the matter closely. As for a debate, I have now accumulated requests for a full week of debates, and I must warn the House that I cannot please everybody.

**Mr. Paul Goodman** (Wycombe): Could the Leader of the House provide the House with an opportunity to debate the Government's proposals to legislate against religious hatred so that Opposition Members and, perhaps, Government Members can inquire how they are going to do so without a definition of religion in the Bill?

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): With Mr. Bean's stand-in.

**Mr. Cook:** I am not quite sure how *Hansard* will interpret my hon. Friend's comment.

The Bill will be published, we hope, in the middle of November, when the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Goodman) will be able to see its full terms. However, an awful meal is being made of issues of definition. Personally, I see no problem whatever with understanding the difference between a joke about a religion and inciting religious hatred and violence. Indeed, we ourselves tackled those questions in the past. I remember when people said that legislation against incitement to race hatred was impossible because it could not be adequately defined. We managed that; the legislation was passed and plays a useful role. I see no reason why we should not do the same with religious hatred.

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington): My right hon. Friend will be aware that on Monday the Home Secretary announced that he would bring forward measures to increase security at airports, and yet, since then, there has been an exposé in the media showing that companies such as Securicor have been allowing staff with no security clearance to work in high-risk areas. Will my right hon. Friend make representations to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions to bring those powers forward urgently to ensure that companies that exploit loopholes in the existing regulations should be prevented from doing so immediately, or, failing that, should not be allowed to operate at the airport itself?

**Mr. Cook:** I saw the reports and made inquiries. There is a genuine dilemma here. The events of 11 September have required heightened security, not just at airports but at many other sites in the UK. It is impossible to provide that additional security without an increase in staff, and it is not possible necessarily to complete the screening of all members of staff before they commence work. The present arrangements make that permissible, provided that the screening proceeds as quickly as possible. The choice facing some of the installations is whether to have any security at all or security with those who may not have been fully screened. Nevertheless, I agree with my hon. Friend: we must make all haste and that is why we seek to introduce an emergency Bill with, we hope, expedited procedures.

**Pete Wishart** (North Tayside): Would the Leader of the House be agreeable to a full debate on the international humanitarian aid effort in Afghanistan, and, if so, could that debate be preceded by a statement from the Secretary of State for International Development so that she can inform the House of her recent visits?

**Mr. Cook:** As the House is aware, my right hon. Friend is currently in Pakistan pursuing that very issue. The Prime Minister and all members of the Cabinet have repeatedly stressed that the humanitarian effort is receiving the same priority and the same resources necessary for the job as the military effort. We will have an opportunity to debate the matter in a fortnight's time and we shall consider nearer the time who is most appropriate to speak for the Government.

**Mr. Bill O'Brien** (Normanton): It is an extremely long time since we debated the work of the Child Support Agency, changes to which will be made next year. The CSA is powerful: it overrides medical evidence and will not allow appeals against its decisions. We should once again be considering the work of the CSA, which impacts on many people's lives. Will my right hon. Friend agree to an early debate on the CSA?

**Mr. Cook:** I will happily draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. As for a debate, I can only invite my hon. Friend to join the queue, in which there are already five in front of him today.

**Mr. Michael Jack** (Fylde): Reports in *The Times* today say that the so-called secret plans to split Railtrack plc into financial and operating arms have been described as unworkable by potential investors. In view of that and the fact that many thousands of ordinary people who are shareholders in the company are still totally in the dark about their position, will the Leader of the House reconsider his earlier view about the use of the Opposition day next Tuesday? That might properly be occupied by a consideration of ministerial conduct and the role of special advisers and not give a sharp focus on Railtrack. If the right hon. Gentleman's statement about commitment to the railways is to become reality, we need to probe the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions thoroughly and carefully in the light of those reports. Can we have a special debate on the subject?

**Mr. Cook:** It is not for me to devise the Opposition motion, nor do I imagine it would be welcome were I to do so. *[Interruption.]* I am grateful for that confirmation of my view on the matter. It is open to all Members of the House within the rules of order to take advantage of that debate to explore the issues that they regard as most germane. For many of my colleagues, one of those issues will undoubtedly be how Railtrack, a company on the brink of bankruptcy, nevertheless in the course of the past 12 months has paid hundreds of millions of pounds to shareholders, which could have been there for the safety of the travelling public.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice** (Pendle): We heard earlier about the calamitous consequences of 11 September for the airline industry. My question is about aerospace. Is my right hon. Friend aware that Rolls-Royce, which is a major employer in my constituency, is expected to announce between 3,000 and 4,000 job cuts? Does he agree that now is not the time for a high-tech company to make panic cuts? Will he invite the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come to the House tomorrow and make an urgent statement about the unfolding crisis in the airline and aerospace industries?

**Mr. Cook:** I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is following these matters with great care and great energy. I fully understand the importance of the impending announcement to the constituents of my hon. Friend and I also understand how important it is that, because of a short-term emergency, we do not disperse skilled teams that work together. I hope that we can all work together so that in the long term there will be healthy airline and aerospace industries in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Nigel Dodds** (Belfast, North): May I support the call for a debate on the airline and aerospace industries in the crisis resulting from the attacks on 11 September? In Northern Ireland, we know that Shorts in particular proposes to lay off thousands of workers as a result of the crisis. I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 261.

*[That this House deplores the fact that British Airways have chosen to use the 11th September terrorist attacks as justification for withdrawing from the Belfast/London Heathrow route; condemns the refusal by British Airways to release slots at Heathrow Airport which could be used by other airlines for this route; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to provide support to ensure that this level of service can be maintained given the dire consequences of this decision on the economy of Northern Ireland.]*

The decision by British Airways to use the terrorist attacks of 11 September as justification for withdrawing from the Belfast International-London Heathrow route has caused great dismay and concern in Northern Ireland, and has removed Belfast and Northern Ireland as a region from the British Airways timetable. Can consideration therefore be given to an early debate on these matters?

**Mr. Cook:** I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety on behalf of his constituents who are employed at Shorts. In the long run, we must face the fact that the only way we can recover both the viability of the airline industry and the order book of the aerospace industry is by getting the public back travelling by air. That is why it is so important that we address our minds to what we can do to improve aviation security still further, to provide that confidence to the travelling public, and that is why it is important that the House deals urgently and sympathetically with the Bill that we have introduced, to ensure that we carry it through expeditiously.

**Mr. Mark Fisher** (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Does my right hon. Friend agree that when considering alternative methods of choosing Select Committee members, priority should be given to two criteria? First, any system should be independent of Government, and secondly, it should be transparent and open. Does he also agree that unless all the names of hon. Members who are applying for membership of Select Committees are published, neither the House nor the public can be confident that the most appropriate hon. Members have been selected?

**Mr. Cook:** I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that the criterion that we must meet is that the body which puts names before the House is independent of party influence and transparent in its accountability. That is what the Modernisation Committee will seek to achieve. I am not sure to what extent it would be practical to publish the names of all those applying for membership of Select Committees, or whether such a system applies in the case of all the parties in the House. However, I can share with my hon. Friend our commitment that we will meet his standards of independence and transparency.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a DEFRA Minister to come to the House at an early date to make a statement about the serious delays in the issuing of movement licences under the new animal movement licensing scheme? I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is aware of the need for farmers to move livestock before the winter. It is therefore important that the House knows what measures DEFRA intends to put in place to ensure that the system runs much more smoothly, in order to allow those much needed movements to take place.

**Mr. Cook:** My colleagues from DEFRA left the Chamber less than an hour ago and I am not sure how

*[Mr. Cook]*

willing they would be to come back straight away. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point and I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware of the importance of the autumn movements. I have already discussed it with her, but shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to her attention.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (North-East Derbyshire): May we have a debate, or be guaranteed an early statement, on the serious situation in Northern Ireland? There are new possibilities in connection with decommissioning, given the general position on terrorism, and there is the problem of the resignation by Ulster Unionists from the Executive. Discussion of those matters should not simply be tacked on to general debates about the wider terrorist situation because the issues are important in their own right and hon. Members should have a chance to debate them.

**Mr. Cook:** My hon. Friend is assiduous in raising this issue, and I imagine that he will have opportunities to ventilate his concerns in the future. I share his hope that the current international climate and the additional impetus that has been given to finding a resolution to areas of conflict that breed terrorism may bear fruit in the case of Northern Ireland as well. That is certainly what the Government are working for.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield): Could we have a statement on the guidelines given to special advisers? I am thinking in particular of the concern reported in the press today and previously about civil servants who have been instructed by special advisers to perform political acts. Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to confirm a report on the BBC this morning that only Jonathan Powell and the Prime Minister's official spokesman have been authorised to give any instructions at any time to civil servants?

**Mr. Cook:** I can happily confirm to the House that there is no provision for special advisers, or indeed anybody else, to instruct civil servants "to perform political acts". There are clear codes for both special advisers and civil servants, and both professions stick within those codes.

**Mr. David Kidney** (Stafford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there has been a slight delay in the general availability of the Auld report since its stated publication date, but that it should be widely available from today? Given that the report proposes root-and-branch reforms to our criminal court system, the Government have rightly announced a period of public consultation until the end of next January. Can my right hon. Friend find time during the consultation period for this Chamber to debate those proposals?

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Cook:** I see that my hon. Friend's point has resonance in other parts of the House. The Auld report is an important, fundamental review of the court system and offers us a substantial improvement to our criminal justice system. It should be dealt with, at all stages, with the importance that it deserves.

**Hywel Williams** (Caernarfon): Is the Leader of the House aware that in the continuing dispute at Friction Dynamex in my constituency the workers have been out for the past five or six months and their only reward so far has been dismissal? May we have a statement from the DTI on the efforts that it has made to resolve that long-running dispute?

**Mr. Cook:** I am not familiar with the case that the hon. Gentleman raises, but I shall draw it to the attention of my DTI colleague and invite him to write to the hon. Gentleman.

**Paddy Tipping** (Sherwood): The Leader of the House has already heard several pleas for a debate on the airline and aviation industry. Given that the board of Rolls-Royce is presently meeting and intends to make a statement after the stock market has closed this evening about the future prospects of the company; given the events of 11 September; and given the need to retain high-quality technical skills in Hucknall, the east midlands and across the country, may we have an early opportunity to discuss the future of that important sector?

**Mr. Cook:** My hon. Friend is correct in that a number of hon. Members have raised that theme in the past hour, and my colleagues and I will obviously need to reflect upon it. As I said earlier, I share those concerns. We must ensure that we do not lose long-term skills because of short-term pressures.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York): May I add my voice to those calling for a full debate in Government time on the recovery of rural businesses? I am sure that the Leader of the House agrees that farming businesses are by far the most numerous such businesses. I should like the debate to cover two aspects. The first is that raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) about the confusion and contradictory advice given by DEFRA about the issuing of livestock licences in the run-up to winter and the distress that that causes to the livestock. The second is the fact that 117 premises were affected by foot and mouth in North Yorkshire but so far only five contracts have been signed to cleanse them, so restocking cannot begin this side of Christmas.

**Mr. Cook:** The hon. Lady has placed on record the extent of the problem in her constituency. As I said, I am not unsympathetic to the case for a debate on the countryside, but I hope that such a debate would be broad and enable us to deal with the rural economy, other aspects of public service in the countryside and the way forward, and not only the crisis of the past few months.

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones** (Cardiff, Central): May I associate myself entirely with the remarks made by the shadow Leader of the House about the postponement of the debate on drug policy that had been scheduled for this Friday? Will my right hon. Friend find time to read the British crime survey, which was published last month? He will find that not only has our drugs tsar come and gone without making a jot of difference, but our Government have not got a snowball's chance in hell of meeting their targets on reduction of crime. Clearly, the current policy is not working and we need to revise it. May we have an urgent debate?

**Mr. Cook:** I rather anticipated that my hon. Friend would raise that subject and I commend him for the vigour

with which he repeatedly does so. He would not expect me to assent to every proposition that he advances, but, as I said, we did have a commitment to a debate on drugs, it remains a commitment and, at an appropriate time, we will try to reschedule the deferred debate that was due this Friday.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. McWalter.

**Mr. Tony McWalter** (Hemel Hempstead): For a moment, Mr. Speaker, I feared that you were about to call time.

As we are on the edge of the most dramatic improvement in real resources for the health service that has ever been seen, and as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health said at the Labour party conference that some managements in the health service are plainly incompetent, will the Leader of the House try to ensure that the Secretary of State comes to the House to explain what he will do about the problem so that the huge increase in resources is not frittered away? Furthermore, will he treat my request with some urgency? In Hemel Hempstead hospital, massive closures in provision are about to be made by an incompetent manager, so I have a particular interest in ensuring that the matter is dealt with rather quickly.

**Mr. Cook:** I think that we have just heard a headline in the Hemel Hempstead newspapers. I am pleased to assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stressed earlier this week in his speech on public services the importance of bringing all those services up to national standards. Indeed, he outlined how we intend to go about that task in the health service.

I thank my hon. Friend for enabling us to conclude this session of business questions on a note of consensus by congratulating the Government on the largest building programme ever in the history of the NHS, doubling the increase in investment in the NHS and providing an additional 3,000 nurses since the last general election was declared.

## Points of Order

1.44 pm

**Mr. Clive Soley** (Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure you will agree that the use of anthrax against the elected representatives of the United States constitutes an attack on the heart of democracy. Do you agree that this House, which is at the centre of our democracy and is widely respected here, in the United States and abroad, should send a message through you to your opposite number in the United States to offer our support at this difficult time? I remind you that it is only 60 years since this House had to be temporarily closed. Afterwards, democracy not only returned but went from strength to strength around the world. I suspect that a suitably worded message of support from you would be very well received in the United States at this difficult time.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that point. I shall certainly send such a message. It may be helpful for the House to know that, after the terrible events of 11 September, I wrote to Speaker Hastert and Mayor Giuliani. I explained the solidarity that Members of this House feel with their American colleagues and the close bond between this House and democratic institutions in the United States. I have noted that Ambassador Farish has been present in the House to hear our debates. I have invited him to Speaker's House, where he will have an opportunity to meet hon. Members from all parts of the House.

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (North Cornwall): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance and some clarification. Earlier this afternoon the mechanism was used of a written question being extended beyond Question Time to enable us to have a statement from a Minister. My colleagues and I very much welcome that despite the confusion over the lack of information. I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for using this mechanism on a number of occasions recently because it enables the House to get a statement from a Minister very rapidly. However, there are two major problems on which I seek your guidance, if not now, then on some future occasion.

First, unlike when a normal statement is made, Members on the two Opposition Front Benches do not get prior notice of the contents of this kind of statement and that caused some confusion today. Secondly, and more formidably, at the moment it appears that the mechanism can be triggered only by a Government Back Bencher and a planted question. Clearly, Opposition Members should also have that opportunity. Will you reflect on that and see whether we can find some way in which this mechanism can be used more widely?

**Mr. Speaker:** I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman has had to say and come back to the House on the matter.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You often advise hon. Members and Ministers to give rapid or at least brief answers. Today we only got as far as Question 10, and, without mentioning any names, you may be aware that a particular Minister gave excessively long answers. I wonder whether you could write a gentle note or, wherever you meet

*[Michael Fabricant]*

Ministers from time to time, have a gentle word with particular Ministers. I realise that this is becoming a rather long and lengthy point of order; nevertheless long, lengthy answers, although they may be helpful, prevent Back Benchers from asking questions.

**Mr. Speaker:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should try to get through the Order Paper, but to get further down the Order Paper I need the co-operation of the House. I would not single out Ministers who give lengthy replies as some Back Benchers ask very lengthy questions. In my opinion, the short, sharp question often gets a short, sharp reply, but I am happy to put it on record that I am very keen to get down the Order Paper.

## BILL PRESENTED

PROCEEDS OF CRIME BILL

Mr. Secretary Blunkett, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Prescott, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Reid, Mr. Secretary Murphy, Mrs. Secretary Liddell and Mr. Bob Ainsworth presented a Bill to establish the Assets Recovery Agency and make provision about the appointment of its Director and his functions (including Revenue functions), to provide for confiscation orders in relation to persons who benefit from criminal conduct and for restraint orders to prohibit dealing with property, to allow the recovery of property which is or represents property obtained through unlawful conduct or which is intended to be used in unlawful conduct, to make provision about money laundering, to make provision about investigations relating to benefit from criminal conduct or to property which is or represents property obtained through unlawful conduct or to money laundering, to make provision to give effect to overseas requests and orders made where property is found or believed to be obtained through criminal conduct, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed [Bill 31].

# Orders of the Day

## European Communities (Finance) Bill

*Order for Third Reading read.*

1.47 pm

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Ruth Kelly):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This Bill will enable the United Kingdom to give effect to the new own resources decision which amends the arrangements for financing the Community budget. These financing decisions were agreed at the Berlin European Council in March 1999.

The decisions made at that European Council represent an important step forwards for the European Community and for the United Kingdom. The Council made several important reforms, preparing the EU for the challenges of enlargement, and it was a negotiating triumph for the UK, securing no increase in the own resources ceiling, maintaining the UK abatement and bringing EU spending under control.

The new own resources decision that we are considering is little changed from the 1994 own resources decision, and any changes made to the decision are financially neutral for the United Kingdom. Our net contribution to the EU budget will not change as a direct result of what we are considering today.

It is important that all the issues of concern to hon. Members on this short but significant Bill are properly scrutinised and the further time allowed for Third Reading will enable us to do so.

Some interesting points were raised and addressed on Second Reading and in Committee. The hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr. Davey) asked several questions about windfall gains and requested additional information and clarification on various detailed points. I wrote to him on 16 July and have recently written to him again on the points that he raised in Committee. Copies of both letters were deposited in the Library of the House but perhaps I could reiterate some of the points that I made in my most recent letter.

First, I should like to clarify the question of whether the cumulative value of the windfall gains forgone might have been greater than the value of the abatement received. I can assure the House that the value of windfalls forgone has been only a small fraction of the value of the abatement. That will continue to be the case.

The average level of windfall gains over the period 1989 to 2001 has been £107 million per annum, whereas the average level of the abatement received over the same period has been £2.2 billion per annum. It is therefore clear that the Government were right to insist on retaining the abatement at Berlin.

It was also right for the United Kingdom to agree to the windfall adjustments, just as earlier Administrations had. We sought a fair agreement at Berlin, and that is what we achieved. I hope that my reassurances have allayed the hon. Gentleman's fears.

**Mr. Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton): I thank the Economic Secretary for her letter of 10 October,

which clarified an issue that was of serious concern to me. I also thank her, on behalf of the House, for asking her officials to spend some of their summer recess making the necessary calculations. I assure her that the figures that she has given today and in her letter answer my question in a substantive way.

**Ruth Kelly:** I thank the hon. Gentleman. It was an enlightening experience for all involved.

Another point raised during our earlier debates concerned the Berlin reforms of the common agricultural policy. The Berlin summit saw the most radical reform of the CAP since its creation. There were significant cuts in the prices of cereals, beef and milk, which brought cereal prices close to world levels for the first time. As a result of those reforms, consumers in the United Kingdom will be about £70 a year better off. Although we will continue to push for further reform, the Agenda 2000 reforms constitute a significant victory for the UK. Berlin also introduced the CAP second pillar, which focuses on rural development and the environment. That was a significant step in the move from market-distorting production-based subsidies.

The Bill ratifies part of the Berlin agreement which secured no increase in UK contributions and safeguarded the abatement. That was a good outcome for the UK, and I commend the Bill.

1.52 pm

**Mr. John Bercow** (Buckingham): It is a pleasure to joust for the first time—I hope that it will not be the last—with the Economic Secretary.

This is an important measure. Although, as was said on Second Reading and in Committee, the Bill is short, its implications are substantial. It is therefore necessary and desirable for us to engage in not a leisurely but a proper and comprehensive debate on Third Reading.

That is also true when we put the debate, and the proposed Act, in the context of the size of the European Union budget. When we talk about what this country contributes to the European Union, it seems extraordinarily difficult to arrive at an agreed figure. Estimates vary greatly, and it is important to distinguish between the gross contribution that the United Kingdom makes to the EU budget and the net contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)—who, sadly, is not present, but who contributed to our proceedings with distinction earlier—has calculated that this country sends approximately £1.2 million every hour. From that, the Economic Secretary will readily deduce that the sum sent each day is some £29 million, and that therefore more than £200 million per week goes from the United Kingdom taxpayer to the European Union.

I stress the words "from the United Kingdom taxpayer to the European Union" because Governments do not, of course, have any money. There is no question of the personal largesse of the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Ruth Kelly) going to the European Union; we are talking about hard-pressed British taxpayers, and the net contribution appears to be more than £4 billion a year.

It is worth noting how the European Union budget is spent. There has, for example, been a marked change in the last decade or so in the proportion of EU funds allocated to structural assistance. I think that the figure in 1988 was around a sixth of the EU budget, whereas it is now nearer a third.

The Economic Secretary, who is never knowingly understated in trumpeting the Government's alleged achievements, was bold on Second Reading and in Committee. Regrettably, today she has already repeated a phrase that she used at an earlier stage. She talked about how the Government accomplished a negotiating triumph. Allowing for the almost inevitable and instinctive tendency to indulge in spin over substance, that was a bit rich and I hope that she does not repeat the claim.

Quite properly for consideration of this important matter, we have a packed House and hon. Members will be aware of the four bases of own resources: agricultural and sugar levies, customs duties, VAT-based contributions and gross national product-based contributions. The Economic Secretary made an entirely factual point about the shift from traditional own resources, as greater emphasis is now placed on GNP-based contributions. That is a simple statement of fact. However, her claim that the outcome of the Berlin European Council and the decisions subsequently taken in September 2000 constitute a negotiating triumph is more controversial.

I shall argue my own case, as will my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Mr. Flight) in his winding-up speech for the Opposition, but it is legitimate to pray in aid, if I can attract the Economic Secretary's attention from the alternative delights of talking to the Paymaster General, the verdict of a Foreign Affairs Committee report. The Economic Secretary will be intimately familiar with "European Union Enlargement and Nice Follow-up", which was published on 10 April. It is not the product of Opposition thinking, but at paragraph 18 it states:

> "The reforms agreed at Berlin may have paved the way for enlargement but further progress will be required to make enlargement a success."

**Ruth Kelly** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Bercow:** I am grateful for the Economic Secretary's sedentary assent to that proposition. She thinks that it makes sense. Therefore, she will immediately share my concern that the issue has not been raised since Berlin, despite no fewer than four opportunities to do so, and that CAP reform has not featured on the agenda. Four countries have held the EU presidency in the intervening period, but none chose to highlight the subject. If she agrees with the Opposition and the Liberal Democrats that further reform is needed, it is not unreasonable to ask when she thinks that it might feature on the presidency agenda.

**Mr. Edward Davey:** I agree that the Bill, like the summit that debated CAP reform, does not go far enough and the hon. Gentleman is right to suggest that the Liberal Democrats want further, much greater CAP reform, but how far did the Conservative Government go on CAP reform during 18 years in office? Their many failures in negotiations with the EU have left us with today's appalling CAP inheritance.

**Mr. Bercow:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who can always be relied on to prove himself a steadfast

*[Mr. Bercow]*

supporter of the Labour Government when they are on the rack. If he continues in that vein, the entitlement to Short money that the Liberal Democrats enjoy on account of their status as part of the Opposition will quickly be called into question. However, I shall happily answer his point.

The hon. Gentleman thinks that we are playing a game of table tennis and that my natural response will be to say what a splendid job the Major Government did on the matter, but I am about to disappoint and perhaps even surprise him. We did something on CAP reform, but nothing like enough. Progress has been modest, but the difference is that I am not claiming dramatic, wholesale reform during 18 years of Conservative government. The Economic Secretary, on the basis of a fairly modest achievement, of which more anon, made a far bigger claim. Although the hon. Gentleman likes to be a helpful contributor, I hope that he will not do the Government's work for them, especially when they are doing their best to advance a rather poor case.

I try to be fair-minded about these matters, but I know that Labour Members may not necessarily take it from me that the outcome of the European Council was modest rather than distinguished. I hope, however, that the Economic Secretary is interested in and inclined to show her respect for the verdict of the hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Mr. Todd). It pains me that he is not here today. It is in order in his absence to pay sincere and fulsome tribute to him for his contribution to our earlier debates. He speaks with some authority on agriculture, and, on Second Reading, in relation to the CAP, he said:

"it is certainly possible to overstate what was achieved."

He went on helpfully to point out:

"Some modest and welcome steps were taken, but modest is certainly the word. The gentle progress towards free-market prices was incomplete. Most commodities traded within the CAP area are substantially more expensive than those in world markets . . . The agreement will not be a rational basis for defending agricultural policy in the forthcoming World Trade Organisation round."—[*Official Report*, 3 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 188.]

I will not dilate further on the subject because I do not want unduly to embarrass the hon. Gentleman when he reads my remarks later. Suffice it to say, he said that he was shocked that there had been no progress on the liberalisation of the sugar regime or on the need to reform what he described as the "ludicrous" milk quota system.

In the circumstances, it seems that the hon. Gentleman's verdict is more closely related to the facts than the Economic Secretary's claim for the Government's achievements. Put another way, my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs was being fair when he said that what the Government secured was not outstanding, but

"arguably not an unreasonable deal."—[*Official Report*, 3 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 222.]

Can the Economic Secretary do something about the prevailing tendency in Government for spin to triumph over substance, optimism over reality and fiction over fact? She will recall that on Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) reminded the House of the commitment made in the Labour manifesto, which boldly asserted:

"our contributions are falling to similar levels as France and Italy."

Yet, the net contributions show no sign of falling. I refer the hon. Lady to the 1999 Court of Auditors annual report, which showed that France was contributing annually £766 million net to Community coffers, Italy £1.153 billion and the United Kingdom £3.482 billion. When she responded to my hon. Friend on that point she said that she stood by the claim that our contributions were falling to levels comparable with those of France and Italy on the assumption of the admission of six new members by 2006. It is a trifle cheeky for her to stand by the Labour manifesto, which made a direct and explicit claim about what is happening to UK contributions, when what the authors of the manifesto meant was that if certain events transpired and if the projected outcome of those events was as it is currently expected to be, there would be a comparable level of contribution. The expression ifs and buts, apples and nuts readily springs to mind.

The hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr. Davey) may be satisfied with the answers that he has had on windfall gains, in which he takes a special, detailed and intelligent interest, but I am not so readily reassured. On Second Reading, the Economic Secretary, with an air of some impatience because the subject had been regularly raised, said that she wanted to set

"straight once and for all"—[*Official Report*, 3 July 2001; Vol.371, c. 229.]

the position in respect of windfall gains relinquished or forgone.

In answer to my colleagues, the Economic Secretary said that the estimated loss to this country as a result of forgoing the windfall effect was approximately 220 million euros, which, if my arithmetic serves me correctly, roughly equates to £150 million. The difficulty with that answer was not that it was untrue but that, as with so much of what the Government lob in our direction, it was only half true. What she did not say, but, I believe, has recently confirmed in correspondence, was that the figure of 220 million euros was not a one-off figure, one-off loss or one-off disadvantage to the United Kingdom but a recurring sum that would arise every year. If I am mistaken and she can put another complexion on the matter, I shall be very happy to hear her do so.

I am, however, privileged to have sight of the Economic Secretary's letter, dated 10 October, to the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton. She talks, in that context, about how average annual windfall gains would represent

"less than 5 per cent. of the average abatement."

Those averages can of course be ghoulish things, often disguising all sorts of variations that could redound to our disadvantage.

Nevertheless, I am grateful to the Economic Secretary for confirming in writing, although she did not repeat the point in her speech today, that on her best estimate she expects that the total level of windfalls to be forgone after enlargement is a little higher—not of the order of 5 per cent. of the average abatement, but rather nearer to 7 per cent. I do not say that that is a point of dramatic significance, but it should not be dismissed. It is important to know when we are talking about a one-off figure of 220 million euros and when we are talking about a figure that will recur for a number of years to come.

I follow with the greatest interest what the Economic Secretary says in these debates, just as I always follow what the Paymaster General says—although she is displaying a particular lack of interest in following what

I am saying today. However, that does not in any way undermine or diminish the significance of the issues that we are raising.

**The Paymaster General (Dawn Primarolo):** If the hon. Gentleman put his arguments more succinctly, rather than taking twice as long to say half as much, my attention would probably be sharper.

**Mr. Bercow:** I do not know why the Paymaster General is so churlish. When I think that I need communications advice from the hon. Lady, for whom I have a high regard, I will be happy to consult her. However, I do not think that that is necessary. There are good arguments to be made, and there are several examples that elucidate them. I have a little way to go, and many key points to emphasise. I am sorry that she is so frosty about it. I am not usually as disobliging to her as she is insisting on being to me.

I should like to draw attention to the failure of the CAP and the inadequacy of its reform. If that pains the hon. Lady, I can only say to her that she has taken the offer. She is in the Government and she has to defend the position. If she is not happy about it and finds it uncongenial, she knows the options that are open to her.

On Second Reading, the Economic Secretary said:

"we achieved the most radical reform of the common agricultural policy since its inception".—[*Official Report*, 3 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 228.]

In that respect, she was echoing what the Chief Secretary had said earlier in the debate—*[Interruption.]*

The Paymaster General would expect me to have done a little research into these matters. I have also had the chance to see what relevant commentators said at the time in response to the Government's achievement. It is not a question of what the Paymaster General or the Economic Secretary think, but of what other observers think. What did the Select Committee on Agriculture conclude? I can quote it with exemplary succinctness for the benefit of the Paymaster General and others. In five words, it said:

"This is a bad deal."

The Opposition have been much more generous and nothing like so ferocious in our criticism. We thought that there was an argument to be made by the Government. However, in the view of the Agriculture Committee, it was a bad deal. In case the Paymaster General thinks that I am inventing that, she can of course refer to the relevant report, of 29 June 1999, at paragraph 6. I feel sure that when, at some point, she leaves the Chamber—I am not encouraging her to do so—it will be because she is going to hotfoot it to the Library to obtain a copy of the report and refer to paragraph 6. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Luff)—the Whip who must be obeyed—reminds me that he was the distinguished Chairman of the Agriculture Select Committee at the time of the report, so he can confirm that what I said is true.

Let us hear what the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Union said about Agenda 2000. The task was to

"facilitate enlargement of the Union; to develop a policy consistent with international trading agreements; better to protect the environment; and to promote rural development."

The Committee's judgment was that those objectives were not achieved.

What did the National Farmers Union chairman, Ben Gill, have to say on the matter? In the foreword to the 1999 NFU publication "Farming Economy", he said that the reforms of the CAP made under the present Government had left UK agriculture in an "inherently unstable state".

The Countryside Alliance has said:

"the recent Agenda 2000 round of CAP reform was a failure. Agenda 2000 failed to address the new pressures of EU expansion, and the Select Committee on Agriculture foresees another round of CAP talks within two years."

English Nature said that the outcome was

"very disappointing for the environment".

The Food and Drink Federation was

"extremely frustrated and concerned by the conclusions of the weakened package of reforms adopted in Berlin".

The Tenant Farmers Association concluded:

"the agreed package stems more from matters of financial and political expediency rather than a desire to place agriculture in Europe on a firm long term platform".

Given the importance of reform of the CAP, which I think is agreed on both sides of the House, the fact that independent commentators are less than exultant—I put it no more harshly than that—about the outcome of the hon. Ladies' negotiating ploys should at least give the Economic Secretary and her exuberant colleague, the Paymaster General, pause for thought.

Having dealt briefly, but with relish, with the Economic Secretary's claims about reform of the common agricultural policy, I now move on, with due enthusiasm, to stealth taxes. I do not want the Paymaster General to feel left out; I shall come to her, and she will not be disappointed. I do not want her to feel that she is excluded from my remarks today, because she will feature in choice fashion. However, I hope that she will exercise the patience for which she is renowned on both sides of the House, because first I want, properly and politely, to address my remarks to the Economic Secretary.

Before I go any further I shall say something to the Economic Secretary that I probably should have said at the outset; I have certainly said it to her outside the House. I have always regarded her as possessing a rare combination of intellectual ferocity and personal charm, so I feel flattered to be opposing her across the Dispatch Box. *[Interruption.]* The Paymaster General, in what I take to be a slightly more jocular fashion than that in which her earlier observations were made, says, "That's the end of a good career."

On Second Reading, on 3 July, considerable attention was paid to article 9, page 14, of the Council decision on the system of the European Communities' own resources. The Economic Secretary will be well aware that that article states:

"The Commission shall undertake, before 1 January 2006, a general review of the own resources system, accompanied, if necessary, by appropriate proposals, in the light of all relevant factors, including the effects of enlargement on the financing of the budget, the possibility of modifying the structure of the own resources by creating new autonomous"—

I emphasise that word—

"own resources and the correction of budgetary imbalances granted to the United Kingdom as well as the granting to Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden of the reduction pursuant to Article 5(1)".

*[Mr. Bercow]*

On that occasion my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood)—sadly, he is not in his place now, although he performed earlier—argued forcefully that the article was Brussels parlance for enabling the European Union to impose its own taxes directly on the British people.

In the course of Second Reading my right hon. Friend challenged the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to strike from the document those references to the creation of autonomous resources and to seek to amend the Bill accordingly. If the Chief Secretary had been prepared to do so, or if he had even replied to my right hon. Friend's request to him to intervene, we might have had some reassurance.

As the Economic Secretary will confirm, the Chief Secretary is no more reticent than I am. He is a regular contributor in the House, and I have always thought that among Ministers he is the veritable Dr. Pangloss of new Labour. He always thinks that the best is in evidence, and that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. Yet when he was challenged by my right hon. Friend to respond to that question, he chose not to do so.

The Economic Secretary, who is a rather braver soul, was prepared to do so, and on Second Reading she quoted a passage from the European Communities (Finance) Act 1995, which was in fact article 10 of the Council decision of 31 October 1994 on the system of the European Communities' own resources. She used the quotation to support her alleged refutation of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham had said.

The article states:

"the Commission shall submit, by the end of 1999, a report on the operation of the system, including a re-examination of the correction of budgetary imbalances granted to the United Kingdom, established by this Decision."

The Economic Secretary then said:

"That position"—

that is, the position in the Council decision of 31 October 1994—

"did not lead to a new EU tax then, and it will not do so now."—[*Official Report*, 3 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 231.]

I do not think that the argument is quite as compelling as she seems to think. She said that article 9 of the Council decision on the system of EC own resources of 29 September 2000 was broadly similar to that of October 1994, so there was no problem.

We need to play the game—an important game—of spot the difference. The notable difference between the two articles is that that of 29 September 2000, as distinct from the one put forward six years before, refers to the creation of new autonomous resources. There is clearly a difference here. We might ask whether the word "autonomous" refers to member states' ability to raise own resources through their own autonomous powers or to the power of the European Union to raise money itself through its own direct and autonomous budgetary powers over and above, and separate from, the autonomous budgetary powers of sovereign states. "Which is it?" I might ask. I am sure that the answer is on the Economic Secretary's lips even as I pose the question.

I hope that the hon. Lady will help to explain that point, because if she does not, she will be aware that we have been undertaking a little of our own private detective work to discover what we can. In that respect I am deeply indebted to one of the brightest minds helping the Opposition in this House—James Cartlidge, who has done superb work on this subject.

At my request, James Cartlidge took it upon himself to contact the European Commission to try to get clarification on the subject, which the Minister had not offered. He spoke by telephone to a Mr. Jean-Pierre Bache, who has responsibility for the

"Outlook for financing and budget forecasts of own resources in the Own Resources evaluation and financial programming section in Directorate B of the Budget Directorate General of the European Commission."

If the Minister would find it helpful for me to supply phone numbers and website references, I should be happy to do so at a later date. I am always a helpful soul; if I can be obliging, I am more than willing.

Mr. Bache was unhappy with the use of the word "autonomous", although that is the English translation given, because he felt that it did not adequately explain the intended meaning. He felt that the phrase "visible and accountable" would have been more appropriate. The reason, as Mr. Bache explained, is that the Commission's intention is to bring EU budgetary affairs closer to the people. Indeed, one might argue that what "autonomous" means in this case is just that—bring the EU budget closer to the people by reaching directly into their pockets. In other words, autonomous EU budgetary authority inevitably leads to Brussels levying its own taxes directly on the British people.

If the Economic Secretary does not share that analysis, she at least owes it to the House to explain what is the purport of the very particular remarks contained in the document announcing the Council decision. As Mr. Bache further explained—it is his explanation and not necessarily ours—that is not the same as the EU taking on its own tax-raising powers. Rather he argued that the new autonomous own resources measures would manifest themselves—I like this and I hope that my hon. Friends do—in more indirect forms while nevertheless achieving greater direct revenue-raising powers for Brussels.

The example that Mr. Bache used was one in which the EU might choose to specify certain percentages of excise duty or VAT as new own resources to be paid into the Brussels budget. The Economic Secretary might argue that we have nothing to fear from article 9 because similar such articles negotiated by Conservative Governments have not led to EU taxes, but we all know that this article will result in the EU having the opportunity to propose new ways in which autonomous resources can be raised.

**Ruth Kelly:** Of course, the hon. Gentleman has not had the benefit of the discussions at the Economic and Finance Council that I was privileged to be party to in July this year. In them, the very subject of a European tax was discussed and the Belgians, who placed it on the agenda, found no enthusiasm for it anywhere in Europe. The Chancellor forthrightly put the UK case that there will be no European tax.

**Mr. Bercow:** I do not find that argument remotely persuasive, for reasons that I am happy to explain. I am afraid that all the Economic Secretary has done is—

**Dawn Primarolo:** Lengthened the hon. Gentleman's speech.

**Mr. Bercow:** Yes, she has. In view of what I said about the Economic Secretary's intellectual ferocity, I had hoped that she would come up with something better than she has just volunteered to the House.

We know that the Chancellor of Exchequer has said that he opposes tax harmonisation but we also know that, on the continent, it is commonplace, when tax harmonisation is writ large in the tabloid newspapers in this country, to employ a different lexicon. Instead, we are told that the EU would gradually like to advance the cause of tax co-ordination. We can then involve ourselves in a semantic debate on the difference between harmonisation and co-ordination.

We know that taxes come in a variety of forms and through a series of disguises. The Economic Secretary has made her point about tax intentions and she will be aware that the Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, has called for a direct EU tax. He thinks that that tax should be levied on all citizens and he is backed by the Belgian Finance Minister and, importantly, by the European Union Commissioner for the Budget, Mrs. Michaele Schreyer. She suggested that the tax should be in the form of an imposition on savings, and Ministers will also be aware of the verdict of Hans Eichel, the German Finance Minister, who argued for an EU-wide tax on 14 June this year.

It is no good the Chief Secretary simply saying that

"any change to the tax regime in Europe is a matter for unanimity . . . we do not accept the need to introduce new taxes."—[*Official Report*, 3 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 143.]

If that is so, will the Economic Secretary explain why the Government agreed without criticism to the insertion in the decision announced in September 2000 of the words that, at the very least, open up the possibility of autonomous revenue-raising powers for the EU?

We know that a tax is not simply just something that is called a tax. If the Economic Secretary is in doubt about that, we can refer to what the EU has said about the use of alternative instruments to affect taxation measures. I refer to the Commission communication "Tax Policy in the European Union—Priorities for the Year Ahead", which said:

"while it remains the Commission's view that a move to qualified majority voting at least for certain tax issues is indispensable, the legal basis will, for the present, remain unanimity."

I note the use of the words "for the present". The communication adds:

"Given the difficulties in reaching unanimous decisions on legislative proposals, which will be compounded by enlargement, the Community should also consider the use of alternative instruments."

The EU is perfectly capable of producing a whole orchestra on this subject to fulfil the objective of increasing the number and scope of revenue-raising proposals.

That point is so blindingly obvious given all our experience with partners in the EU that only an extraordinarily clever person could fail to see it. I do not know whether the Paymaster General wishes to volunteer for that description, but a danger exists and—without wishing to overstate it—it would be very foolish to ignore it.

**Mr. Edward Davey:** Will the hon. Gentleman confirm two points? The first is that he is arguing that charges could be made on the British people without the British Government having the chance to veto them at Brussels. If so, will he provide rather more substantive legal back-up than he has done hitherto? Secondly, can he confirm that his argument of the past 10 minutes has nothing to do with the Bill?

**Mr. Bercow:** I am very concerned to relate my remarks to the Bill. Although the hon. Gentleman is putting in a job application to replace you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to be guided by your judgment rather than his.

The hon. Gentleman challenges me to provide a legal basis and precedent to justify my point that what is being planned is effectively a denial of the veto. He will know perfectly well that instruments of the EU can be used for a variety of purposes. I refer, for example, to the introduction of the working time directive as an EU health and safety measure, when it manifestly is not that. It was introduced on that basis, because the EU knew perfectly well that it would be not be able to get it through otherwise. Introducing it under qualified majority voting provided an alternative route.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that all sorts of measures have been justified in the name of single market legislation and the greater approximation to a level playing field in matters of trade and commerce than has existed hitherto. If he is so naive as to suppose that to raise revenue we need to have what is formally described as a tax, he greatly underestimates the wizardry and sophistication of his masters in the EU. I strongly suggest that he do something about that.

On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham drew attention to several measures that have come in already to the disadvantage of the UK, violating entirely the hon. Gentleman's cardinal principle—he would have us believe that it is his cardinal principle—of a right of a national veto on taxation. The art levy has already done considerable damage to the UK art market, and it will have a further detrimental effect. There also is the serious risk of an energy tax.

**Dawn Primarolo:** To reveal all the facts, will the hon. Gentleman explain which Government agreed to the introduction of the art levy?

**Mr. Bercow:** The Paymaster General is playing the party game, but I am very happy to deal with her point. I have always been opposed to droit de suite, and many Conservative Members have consistently opposed it. We regard it as detrimental, but her Government are enthusiastically pursuing it even though it was not the preference of the Conservative Government. She knows that, on that subject, she has not a leg on which to stand.

I am conscious of what Mrs. Schreyer said on behalf of the European Commission in response to a question asked by my colleague, the Conservative finance spokesman in the European Parliament, Theresa Villiers. When, on 31 July, Mrs. Schreyer was asked about the autonomous resources that might be planned, she said:

"An objective could be to replace the existing financing system of the European Union's budget with one or more European taxes".

Although it is difficult to see how that matches up to what she previously said, she curiously adds:

"without imposing an additional financial burden upon European citizens."

*[Mr. Bercow]*

If she is saying, "We are going to find a new tax, but we are going to compensate for it by a reduction in expenditure or tax-raising measures elsewhere", the expression "pigs before eyes" comes to mind. However, I would be happy to see whether she can provide an earnest of her good intentions.

We know in any case that on taxation measures the Government's hands are not clean. My cup runneth over today, because the Paymaster General has done us the great courtesy of a visit. If the hon. Lady's record on these matters were as widely known as it should be, it would not commend itself to the electors of Bristol, South. We know, and she may be proud of the fact, that shortly after the 1997 election, a code on business taxation was established in the European Union. Shortly afterwards—I do not remember precisely when, but I feel certain that the date is imprinted on her mind—she was put in charge of an EU-wide working party on the investigation of methods to give effect to that code. Specifically, from March 1998 onwards, she was charged with the responsibility of identifying what was described as unfair tax competition.

There is a genuine debate to be had about whether genuine tax competition can be unfair. There are those of us who believe very strongly in the desirability of tax competition, although I am not sure that the hon. Lady is among us. I have been disturbed by two phenomena of late. The first was the identification by the Paymaster General of 88 examples of tax reliefs, credits or benefits that helped the United Kingdom and which she was volunteering to give up within the European Union, to the manifest disadvantage of British trade and commerce. It struck me as an extraordinary state of affairs for her to countenance.

**Dawn Primarolo** *rose—*

**Mr. Bercow:** The hon. Lady is understandably sensitive on the point, so I give way.

**Dawn Primarolo:** I am just trying to help the hon. Gentleman to ensure that he does not inadvertently say something inaccurate to the House. There were not 88 British measures. This is not the subject of today's debate, so I will not engage him any further, but I should be happy to do so at another time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord):** Order. We are straying rather wide of the matter before the House, and I would be grateful if the hon. Gentleman returned to it.

**Mr. Bercow:** I am very happy to be guided by your strictures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will focus my remarks accordingly. I will not argue the toss about whether or not there were 88 measures; we can always argue subsequently about exactly how many measures there were. That is a matter for legitimate debate.

In the interests of having a proper debate about autonomous revenue-raising powers, which is directly relevant to the Bill, I strongly advise the Economic Secretary and Paymaster General to get hold of copies of an excellent document published by the Centre for Policy Studies, the author of which is the colleague to whom I referred a few moments ago, Theresa Villiers MEP. The document is entitled, "European Tax Harmonisation: The Impending Threat". It makes absolutely fascinating reading. I read it late last night and studied it very carefully, and I can tell the Paymaster General that it certainly is not a cure for insomnia. It is a thoroughly good document and it tells us the track record of this matter.

The significance of what the Paymaster General said is that the work of the working party would "never be finalised". I presume that the hon. Lady will not deny that she said that on 10 October 2000 to the European Parliament's economic and monetary affairs committee. The Government have trumpeted as an outstanding achievement what is really a very modest deal secured as a result of the Berlin summit. It is not a great accomplishment. The hon. Member for South Derbyshire, who is a legendarily independently minded representative in the House, put his finger on it when he said that it was modest.

If the Economic Secretary would simply say that the Government think that they have reached a worthwhile, but modest, achievement, and that the Opposition should acknowledge the progress that has been made, I would take my hat off to her, but I confess that I am not holding my breath in anticipation that she will suddenly abandon the term "triumph", which she has twice used to describe the measure.

The Government did not achieve very much. There is a widespread and understandable anxiety on the part of a great many of our fellow citizens that there could be in train new revenue-raising and decision-making powers of the European Union. If those new powers flow from the decision and the passage of the Bill, it will be to the eternal discredit of the Economic Secretary. She has indicated that that will not happen. Many of us fear that it will. Those concerns are genuine; they are frequently expressed, and they should as a matter of course be listened to respectfully and heeded in practice.

What we need from the Government, throughout public policy but no more so than in European policy, is frankness and candour. Over the past four years we have had neither. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are determined to ensure that over the next four years we get a greater measure of both.

2.35 pm

**Mr. Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton): I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow), and I welcome him to his new duties. I look forward to sparring with him and with the Economic Secretary and other Treasury Ministers in due course.

Over more than half an hour, the hon. Gentleman seemed to make three substantive points. The first, which took 10 minutes, was that the word "triumph", which was used by the Economic Secretary on Second Reading to describe the Bill and the negotiations that preceded it, was wrong. The hon. Gentleman would describe the Bill as modest. I agree with him, as I said on Second Reading:

"It is a modest measure that arises from the modest decisions taken at the Berlin summit. Indeed, its modesty explains why it is disappointing."

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman spoke about the fact that the decisions taken at the summit, which led to the Bill, were disappointing in that CAP reform was not a greater element. He is right, and I made the same point on Second Reading:

"We must be far bolder in reforming the CAP."—[*Official Report*, 3 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 157-160.]

The Economic Secretary disagreed with me in that debate and defended the decisions taken at the summit. She feels that CAP reform had gone a long way, but I do not think that there has been substantial reform. We do not have a vision of how we can fundamentally reform the CAP. So far, all reform has been incremental, and the Bill is one more small step towards a vision that is, as yet, unshared and unclear. That is one of the big failures of the summit and of the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman's third major point was about tax harmonisation. I do not share his concerns. I agree that tax harmonisation would be wrong, but I disagree that it is at all likely. Indeed, he seemed unable to substantiate his allegation that the Government would be unable to veto any such proposal. Not only is he wrong, but the major point that he made does not relate to the Bill.

**Mr. Bercow:** The hon. Gentleman and I may just have to agree to differ. I am sorry that he thinks that I do not have a justification for my point. I maintain that I do, both on the basis of historical precedent in relation to the identification of examples of unfair tax competition and in relation to the text of the decision. Can the hon. Gentleman, who obviously disagrees with my interpretation, tell me what he understands by the term "autonomous revenue-raising powers", which are newly to be sought?

**Mr. Davey:** By focusing on that textual point, the hon. Gentleman misses the point, which is that a veto is retained by each member state. The Liberal Democrats support that veto, as do the Government and, I assume, Conservative Front Benchers. That means that the problems that he spent 10 minutes outlining do not exist.

I am surprised that we are here, because a Programming Committee met on 18 July. I was present and so was the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Luff), the Conservative Whip. We argued that this day's debate was not necessary, but the Government persisted in vehemently arguing that it was necessary. In the end, there was a vote in the Committee. In preparing for the debate, I thought that the Conservative spokesman would keep his or her comments short. Perhaps that was wishful thinking. *[Interruption.]* The Conservative Whip says that by the standards of the hon. Member for Buckingham he did deliver a short speech. Perhaps he is right. Let us warn right hon. and hon. Members who are not present of that.

The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats agreed in the Programming Committee that we did not need an extra day, primarily because all the issues had been debated on Second Reading and would be covered in Committee and on Report. We decided that we could move swiftly on. Indeed, the Conservatives did not vote against the Government. I listened to the speeches by the Conservative spokesman and thought that the Bill—as opposed to some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Buckingham, which went beyond its remit—was relatively uncontroversial. Perhaps the Conservative Front Bench has changed its position with its change of leader.

**Mr. Bercow:** I am taken aback by the hon. Gentleman. He is spending some minutes lamenting the length of the Third Reading debate on a critical matter that relates to a net UK contribution to the European Communities of about £4 billion a year. What is his problem? Is he so anxious to debate the ministerial salaries order that he wants to end this important debate, or is he missing a preprandial drink in Kingston and Surbiton?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Both hon. Gentlemen are making points about how we have arrived at this stage. Perhaps we can now get on with Third Reading.

**Mr. Davey:** I am more than delighted to do so.

The Minister set out the general background to the debate on Second Reading and earlier. The nature of the debate is that the own resources decision has been reformed, and the Bill implements that change in UK law. I welcomed many of those reforms on Second Reading, as did Conservative Front Benchers, especially the switch from the value added tax aspect of own resources to gross national product, which is a much fairer system, the ceiling of 1.27 per cent. of GNP on the EU budget and the proper discipline that has been placed on EU finance. The Government should be congratulated on gaining those substantive reforms, although they are relatively modest.

On Second Reading, I said that the Bill's major problem is its modesty. We need far more radical solutions to reform the EU budget. The Bill does not even begin to nod in the direction of those radical reforms. EU finances have rightly been criticised for many years by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Perhaps we should also take a closer look at the way in which we manage our domestic budgets, which often leaves a lot to be desired.

Recent reforms of EU finances include putting the 2001 budget under policy headings for the first time. Right hon. and hon. Members may think that that is a minor reform, but the fact that we have had to wait until 2001 to gain such a modest change goes to show what a state the EU budget is in. The Bill fails because there is so much more to do. Why are we not setting budgets based on outcomes, outputs and activity-based management at an EU level? That would be sensible. Why are we not rationalising the whole EU budget? That would result in cuts, which I am sure would delight the hon. Member for Buckingham.

There are too many budget lines scattered around the EU budget, too many small proposals for expenditure and too many small pots of money—the EU slush funds. They are unnecessary and do not amount to a row of beans in terms of what they produce. We and our European representatives should be arguing to strike out such pork-barrel politics. We need to focus the EU on its core competencies, which will make the budget more transparent. We need to examine key areas of EU spending. CAP reform has been discussed, and I agree with the hon. Gentleman on that.

We also need to consider the budget for external aid. Chris Patten brought that to light and proposed many interesting reforms of the way in which the EU should

*[Mr. Davey]*

allocate substantial sums that have been earmarked for it, but that money is often wasted. It is not spent in the right way and it certainly does not meet the objectives of the initiators of the budget lines. We need to implement a major reform of the way in which we allocate such a serious amount of money.

The Bill and the discussions that preceded it did nothing to tackle major reforms. Despite the rhetoric of Eurosceptics, there are not many officials in Brussels. The Commission does not have an army of civil servants. As the EU budget is not focused on its core competencies, officials run around trying to administer small pots of money that have no effect. Their time is wasted by dealing with detailed application forms and monitoring and auditing the money. If we focused the budget, we could get better value for money from civil servants in Brussels.

**Mr. Bercow:** I note what the hon. Gentleman says about the small size of the centrally employed EU bureaucracy, but I am sure that he will acknowledge the large number of British civil servants and civil servants in other member states whose principal responsibility is to give effect to EU decisions, so he should not develop his point too far. Is he arguing for a reorganisation of EU finance, with fewer small pots and more money put into the larger ones, or is he making the bold and ground-breaking assertion for a Liberal Democrat that the EU budget should be cut?

**Mr. Davey:** I am arguing for rationalisation. If that leads to cuts and frees up resources, member states might take the political decision to remit the money to member states or use it for other purposes. I would not prejudge those decisions, but I object to money being wasted on a structure that is clearly inefficient. We should be arguing that, the Government should have argued that and we should be calling for greater reforms of the EU budget.

I have another example. Much EU spending takes place in member states, but is administered by officials in Brussels—a ludicrous process. It has to be inefficient and cannot be as transparent as a system whereby money that is spent in, for example, the UK is administered by British civil servants answerable to British Ministers. The process needs significant reform and is one reason why I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Bill is modest.

There was not a great deal of argument about the Bill's details when we considered them in Committee and on Report. After all my research, I found only one cause for concern, to which the Minister responded in her letter to me on 10 October. The reform of own resources means that the UK Government will give up windfall gains from budget reforms due to the expansion of Europe and so on to keep the abatement originally agreed by Baroness Thatcher at Fontainebleau.

I asked the Minister whether the cumulative effect of giving up windfall gains—they are related not solely to the Bill and the decisions that preceded it, but to discussions undertaken by the previous Conservative Government—was larger than the benefit of the abatement. She was not able to answer that factual question in Committee or on Report. I pushed her on it because I wanted to persuade her to ask her officials to consider the question and do the number crunching, although she was hesitant to do that at first. I am delighted that she did so because the figure that she set out in her letter to me on 10 October, which is now in the Library, provides Members with the information necessary to allow the Bill its Third Reading.

The calculation could have shown that the cumulative effect of the windfall gain was larger than the abatement. That would have been a major new piece of information on which Members could have decided whether to allow the Bill to proceed. As I and my colleagues voted to give the Bill a Second Reading, I am delighted that the calculation turned out as it did, and the abatement is indeed larger.

I want to keep my remarks brief, as we do not need to discuss the matter in any more detail. The key substantive point that emerged under previous scrutiny has been answered by the Minister. Unlike the hon. Member for Buckingham, I thought that the letter was clear and that it answered my points. I should stress that it was the Liberal Democrats who made those points at all stages and forced the Government to provide the information that was key to the Bill's scrutiny. If there is a Division, I and my colleagues will vote in favour of Third Reading. We hope that, when the Government engage in discussions on future reform of the EU budget, they will be rather more bold and seek rather more radical change.

2.51 pm

**Mr. Howard Flight** (Arundel and South Downs): I would not try to copy the sophisticated rhetoric of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow), but I was delighted that the Opposition were able to include in this debate the droit de suite. I can comment only that when I last spoke on the subject, I made the great mistake of saying "seigneur" instead of "suite".

This debate has been rather unsatisfactory; we know that we are going through the motions. It is about what was agreed at Berlin two years ago, and the nature of the Bill does not permit any sensible amendment. We are faced with a "take it or leave it" approval of the deal that was done.

Our basic point is that the essence of the deal on changes to VAT and gross national product funding is reasonable. The VAT-based contribution is to be amended by reducing the maximum call-up rate to 0.75 per cent. in 2002-03 and to 0.5 per cent. thereafter, and member states' GNP-based contributions are to be increased.

The hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr. Davey) sought to claim huge credit for inducing the Minister rightly to make it clear that the cost of giving up our windfall gain would be cumulative. I think that most Members were aware of that. That of course means that we are not dealing with the one-off figure that was quoted. However, I am grateful to the Minister for clarifying that for the record. The major dishonesty of Berlin, however, was that it was supposed to be about enlargement. In a sense, it was the antithesis of that because the failure adequately to reform the common agricultural policy blocks enlargement.

I believe that anyone who is European must want enlargement of the European Union. From visiting people in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, I know that they feel that they have been treated appallingly. The iron curtain has been down for 12 years and they have been told by the EU to do this, that and the other, but they are

still left dangling on a string waiting for the prospect of becoming EU members. Some states have even reconsidered the desirability of becoming members. However, all those who want an open, liberal and flexible EU, rather than an inward-looking one, must want a widened membership.

**Angus Robertson** (Moray): Can the hon. Gentleman reconcile those opinions—I fully endorse them; I think that all Members would like the rapid enlargement of the EU as soon as possible—with his party's voting record last night? The Conservatives voted against the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, which will effect EU enlargement.

**Mr. Flight:** I fear that the hon. Gentleman is wasting the House's time; there are different issues involved. The treaty of Nice is about going a step too far in political unification, while enlargement is the very opposite of that. A Europe of very different economies and countries cannot be a rigid and inflexible EU, but Nice would take us down that path.

**Roger Casale** (Wimbledon): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could answer the question that I put to the shadow Foreign Secretary yesterday, to which he was unable to reply. Were ratification of the treaty of Nice to fail, when would be the earliest possible date that EU enlargement could occur?

**Mr. Flight:** With respect, the question is nothing to do with the matter before us. I am simply trying to make the point that something that was supposed to be about enlargement occurring as early as possible was actually about postponing enlargement for an unlimited period. Until there is adequate reform of the CAP, enlargement is not possible. That is well realised by countries in Europe that want to join the EU.

I turn to article 9, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham elucidated and—dare I say—entertained the House. It is important that the French equivalent of "autonomous" has crept in. The Minister argued on Second Reading that article 9 merely repeated what had gone before, that we should not take any notice of it, and so forth. The wording has been tightened marginally.

There is of course no point in having article 9 unless it is meant to mean something. It reserves the right to consider pan-European taxation and, indeed, to reconsider the British abatement. What is the point of Mr. Bache and his army of staff considering the subject if no one has any intent of making progress towards it? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) and I pointed out on Second Reading, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham pointed out today, the fact that the issue is included in what we are being asked to approve should not be overlooked. The Bill puts down a marker with which we do not agree and with which I do not think people generally agree.

There is no free lunch. The issue really was about Germany, Holland, Austria and Sweden wanting to pay less. That meant that someone must pay more or, to the extent that it might be possible to reduce the total budget, our contributions—allegedly—will not rise. However, we will not enjoy any reduction in contributions either. That fails to address the central issue that France, which has an economy roughly comparable to ours, pays £760 million net, whereas the UK pays £3.5 billion. We all know why; it is because of the CAP. We also all know why the CAP has been so difficult to reform. Yet again, failure to reform the CAP has hindered the debate on fair contributions and the problems for a more outward-looking Europe, and nothing has been done about such failure.

**Mr. Wayne David** (Caerphilly): Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the last time that the common agricultural policy was reformed was at the 1992 Edinburgh summit, where, under the Tory Government, agriculture spending was increased by 9 per cent?

**Mr. Flight:** The point that the hon. Gentleman makes has already been answered—we do not claim that we succeeded in reforming the CAP. Although spending under the CAP has fluctuated, it continues to account for nearly half of the EU's total spending, and it is projected to rise from 44 to 46 per cent. in 2006—so if what he said about the last attempt was correct, the expenditure will increase yet again.

In the debate held on 3 July, the Chief Secretary told the House that, under the current arrangements, if the EU gross national product reduced, the ceiling on EU expenditure would be automatically reduced, so EU expenditure would decrease. Although it is clear, alas, that the EU's GNP will reduce, is the Economic Secretary confident that it will be practical to reduce expenditure at the same time, as her colleague assured the House?

In essence, the deal was done at Berlin in 1999; in no way do the Government's proposals represent a negotiating triumph. Indeed, I hate to think what might have happened if the Economic Secretary ever referred to having suffered a disaster. We got the minimum deal that was acceptable. The claim that retaining the abatement was a great achievement seems wholly bogus. The abatement was negotiated by previous Conservative Administrations, and it has saved some £20 billion. Indeed, it will save about £2 billion next year.

As the House is well aware, we have a veto on that matter—unless a subtle wheeze is discovered to water it down. Our net position was not improved; nor was the unfairness in the net contributions made by different-sized economies corrected. As other hon. Members have said, no proper review of the EU budgetary process and what needs to be done to eliminate waste and excess was undertaken to ensure that money is spent as it should be. Yet the expectation is that EU administrative costs will rise from 5 to 6 per cent. in 2006, under the arrangements in hand.

Before I finish, I should like to emphasise that it is not correct to claim that there was a triumph. In particular, it is wrong not to make it clear that the Berlin arrangements failed in their intended objective, which was to accelerate movement along the road by which enlargement could occur. On that score, we are unhappy with what was achieved, but, as we made clear on 3 July, the financial deal at the centre of the issue is minimally acceptable.

**Roger Casale:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me a second time. It is true that previous Conservative Administrations played a part in negotiating

*[Roger Casale]*

previous British abatements, but does he really think that, given the Conservative party's present stance on Europe, it could negotiate any abatement on the scale that we have achieved?

**Mr. Flight:** The Government have merely continued with that which the Conservative Government negotiated, and a veto exists to retain that arrangement, so the Government have achieved nothing at all. What will happen when the Conservatives come to power at the next election will depend on what is going on in Europe, but I am confident that a general clear-sighted assessment of European affairs will enable us to negotiate whatever is right and proper.

3.4 pm

**Ruth Kelly:** With the leave of the House, I should first like to say that, once again, we have had a good-natured debate. It is interesting to hear the shadow Chief Secretary, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Bercow), speaking for the Opposition. I congratulate him on his appointment to the shadow Cabinet, and I thank him for his kind remarks. Having said that, I hope that my reputation will not take too long to recover with my colleagues.

Perhaps I should be surprised that the hon. Gentleman has discussed a European issue at his first appearance at the Dispatch Box since his elevation. In doing so, not only has he chosen to ignore the edicts of his party leader, who has asked his party to adopt a low profile on Europe, but he has gone even further than previous Conservative Front Benchers would have chosen to do, by gracing us with his presence here today. As has been said, he must realise that his own party previously voted against the programme motion for Third Reading to take place today.

However, perhaps I should not be too surprised, after all; the hon. Gentleman's views on Europe are well known. Indeed, if he had not been recalled to Parliament recently, he would have shared a platform at a Conservative party conference fringe meeting with Norman Lamont and the Bruges Group chairman, who stood up to applause when the panel was told that the party should campaign for Britain's withdrawal from Europe.

I certainly maintain that the Bill represents a triumph for Britain. Indeed, the outcome is far better than the two previous Conservative Governments ever achieved. In fact, when the last own-resources decision was considered in 1992, the agreement involved a 22 per cent. real increase in the financial perspective over seven years. In 1988, the increase was 17 per cent.

**Mr. Bercow:** The temptation is irresistible. The hon. Lady seeks to cast aspersions on the Opposition's position. First, this is Government business, and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition would expect us vigorously to oppose it, which is what we are doing. Secondly, to avoid any doubt, my position on Europe, and that of Her Majesty's Opposition, is that we are in favour of free trade, not federalism; co-operation, not coercion; and a Europe of nation states, not a single European state.

**Ruth Kelly:** I thank the hon. Gentleman very much for clarifying his views on Europe, although I note that he does not dispel my suggestion that he thinks we may have to withdraw from the EU. As he and the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Mr. Flight) said, our proposals do not represent an unreasonable deal and, as I said on Second Reading, that is high praise indeed from Opposition Members.

The hon. Member for Buckingham has indeed done his research. He gave the various figures for the gross cost of joining the EU. The gross figure that he cited was, I think, £1.2 million an hour. However, the net cost per head is £56 a year, and I believe that that is money well spent. It gives the people of Britain a right to be part of the largest European single market, comprising 370 million people, which is estimated to increase output by 1.5 per cent., and other benefits and jobs depend on our membership of the EU and the single market.

The hon. Gentleman dwelt at length on the CAP. Of course, we recognise that further reforms need to be made to the CAP. A mid-term review of CAP financing, involving the cereals and the dairy regimes, is due in 2002. We must use that opportunity for further CAP reform. I totally agree with him that more needs to be done, but Agenda 2000 represents the most radical reform of the CAP since its inception. In fact, if we had not managed to make alliances with Sweden, Denmark and Italy, any reform of the CAP would have been extremely unlikely. We are in the vanguard of those negotiations; the Government's ability to form alliances enables us to push the agenda forward.

**Mr. Bercow:** The hon. Lady teased me, so she will not mind if I tease her. Does she endorse the verdict of the hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Mr. Todd) that the outcome of the Berlin Council was "modest"? Does she share his shock at the failure to achieve progress on free markets in sugar and milk quotas?

**Ruth Kelly:** The hon. Gentleman surely realises that I have enormous respect for my hon. Friend the Member for South Derbyshire (Mr. Todd), whose interest and knowledge of such matters is recognised by Government and Opposition Members. He must agree that my hon. Friend did not question what I have told the House today—that the United Kingdom is in the vanguard of reform and we are pushing for further reform. Of course, we recognise that more is needed and we intend to pursue such action. I merely point out to the hon. Gentleman, who described the Berlin Council as modest, that in the 1980s spending on the CAP represented more than 60 per cent. of the EC budget; this year, it will be 45 per cent. I am sure that he agrees that that is a great step forward. He questioned the nature of our contributions, which have come down in line with those of France and Italy, and asked whether it is right to incorporate six new member states in our assessment. I suggest to the House that it would have been misleading for us not to incorporate the most likely participants in an enlarged EU.

We have had an interesting debate, with both Opposition parties discussing the windfall gains that the UK has forgone in line with previous practice, which was agreed when the Conservatives were in government. As the hon. Member for Buckingham noted, I have written to the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr. Davey) and placed a copy of that correspondence in the Library for Members to read and study. The figure for the windfall gain that the hon. Member for Kingston and

Surbiton quoted was an estimate from the European Commission itself. The amount of windfall gain to be forgone, he will realise, will vary from year to year as a result of the duties and levies collected, the effect of consumer expenditure on the VAT base, the level of the VAT base and other factors, but I will not bore the House by going through them. However, the amount is purely an estimate and not a definitive figure for the windfall gain from year to year.

We had an interesting and entertaining discussion about the own resources decision and article 9. The matter was first raised in the House by the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), and I was disappointed that he was not present to hear my response. Article 9 does not represent in any way a potting of precedent, which the Conservative Government agreed. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Buckingham well knows, and as the hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton pointed out, that is not a critical aspect of a hidden regime in tax policy. We are absolutely determined to maintain our stance that there should be no new tax-raising powers for the EU. As the hon. Member for Buckingham will know, at ECOFIN in July we had the enthusiastic support of many other member states in that position. He will also know that there could be no new EU tax without the unanimous support of EU Finance Ministers.

**Mr. Bercow:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady, who is trying hard to dispel our concerns although, frankly, mine have not been assuaged. However, in the light of what she has just argued, will she tell the House the significance of the inclusion in the article of the word "autonomous"?

**Ruth Kelly:** I certainly listened with interest to the results of the telephone conversation that one of the hon. Gentleman's friends had with someone in France, I believe. I do not think that he would expect me to comment on a telephone conversation to which I was not privy, but the important principle is whether we have a veto on any new EU finance tax-raising powers. I put it clearly to the House, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has done, and as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury did on Second Reading, that we have no intention of consenting to a new EU tax. Any such tax will depend on the unanimous consent of all EU members.

The hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton made several well-informed and interesting comments. I certainly agree that we need to address the EU budget; rationalising it is a priority. We discussed that in Committee and, as he knows, we are giving a high priority to reform, with a focus on outputs and delivery, rather than inputs. I also thank him for his comments on windfall gains; I am sure that most people in the House will wish to do so.

The hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs made some interesting comments, some of which we have already addressed in Committee, so I shall not prolong our debate by going through all of them. However, he mentioned the financing of the UK's abatement, and I would like to reiterate that any changes to it that were agreed do not in any respect affect the position of the British taxpayer. The Berlin Council addressed the problem of other large net contributors to the community budget: Germany, Austria, Sweden and the Netherlands. In future, they will pay less towards the UK abatement, but the cost of that will be met by the other 10 member states, not the UK, so the change should have no net effect whatsoever.

In conclusion, the Bill demonstrates the huge benefits of Britain's constructive engagement with the EU. It shows that by taking a leading role in reform and by working together with other member states, we can achieve outcomes that are good for the UK and the EU. The agreement will mean stronger controls on EU spending, the beginnings of a more effective agricultural policy and no increase in the own-resources ceiling. The Bill ratifies part of the Berlin agreement that secured no increase in contributions from the UK and safeguarded the abatement. That is a good outcome for the UK and I commend the Bill to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.*

## Ministerial Salaries

3.17 pm

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Privy Council Office (Mr. Stephen Twigg):** I beg to move,

That the draft Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 2001, which was laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.

The March report of the SSRB—the Review Body on Senior Salaries—on parliamentary pay and allowances was debated in both Houses on 5 July and its recommendation on Members' pay was agreed. Not discussed at that time by the House was the SSRB's recommendation No. 2 that Lords Ministers should receive an equivalent increase to that of Members of this House. The proposal was passed by the House of Lords on 23 July.

The order gives effect to recommendation No. 2—that there should be an increase in Lords Ministers' pay of £4,000 in two instalments of £2,000. The effective date of the first instalment is 20 June 2001, the state opening of Parliament. The order provides for the second £2,000 instalment from 1 April 2002 payable in addition to the automatic uprating of Lords Ministers' salaries, which takes effect from the same day.

The purpose of the increase is twofold: first, to ensure that ministerial pay remains broadly comparable to that of posts in the public and private sectors, and, secondly, to ensure that the cash differentials between Commons Ministers' salaries, including their parliamentary salary, and Lords Ministers' salaries do not widen. The SSRB thought it important that Lords Ministers' pay did not lose ground against that of their counterparts in this House. The SSRB's recommendation builds on its 1999 report which recognised that Lords Ministers' pay had failed to match the responsibilities of their work. I am sure that there will be a consensus in all parts of the House that Lords Ministers play an important part in government and in Parliament, which the order recognises.

The order also gives effect to similar rises for the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition Chief Whip in the Lords. In total, 26 peers will benefit from the order, so the total cost will be modest.

3.20 pm

**Mr. Eric Forth** (Bromley and Chislehurst): I have not yet been too long in the position that I now occupy, but I am already alarmed at the extent to which I find myself in agreement with the Government and Ministers, and this is another such occasion. However, this occasion allows us briefly to reinforce the importance that certainly the Opposition give to the role played by the other place and its Ministers.

I have never had any doubt in my mind, and I have even less doubt now, that the House of Lords is a vital part of our parliamentary process. It is an institution that gives important safeguards to our people, so it is important that we recognise the role played by Members of the House of Lords and, therefore, Ministers in the House of Lords. To that extent, I welcome the order today.

There are questions that are not for today but which we would do well to consider as to whether or not or how far even the SSRB recommendations give effect to making ministerial pay broadly comparable to that in the private sector, as I think the Minister said. I have always been intrigued as to how it is that even a body as distinguished as the SSRB can set out to identify some sort of comparability between what Ministers of the Crown do and what is done in the private sector.

I have always had some doubt about how far that comparability can be stretched, but let us be thankful for what the SSRB has given us. It is has given us the opportunity to make ministerial pay generally, and in this case ministerial pay in the House of Lords, at least somewhat more realistic, and for that much we should be grateful. It is for another occasion for us to return to whether ministerial pay either here or in the Lords is sufficient.

Having said that, I have one question for the Minister for the sake of clarification. The explanatory note intriguingly states:

"The amounts specified in this Order are the maximum salaries payable. The actual salaries may therefore be less."

On what basis would the salaries be less and who would decide that they should be less? The Minister may say that the Government will decide—or more probably the Prime Minister, because he appears to decide most things—but what interests me is not so much what the Prime Minister decides for the salaries of his Ministers, but whether the Prime Minister would then decide the salaries of Opposition officeholders, as set out in schedule 2.

I ask that for clarification because, in some circumstances, it could give rise to difficult or contentious tensions. I hope that I can be reassured that my suspicions are unfounded, but I should be grateful if the Minister could expand on that delphic sentence. Having said that, we are more than happy to support the order.

3.23 pm

**Mr. Andrew Stunell** (Hazel Grove): I thank the Minister for bringing the order forward. It is deceptively short and bland in what it says and does. I do not pick any quarrel with the proposal for ministerial salary increases in the House of Lords and the bringing of them into line with those in the House of Commons. I would only pick up the point made by the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) in relation to comparability with the private sector, a point that the Minister raised and on which he might wish to elaborate.

When one considers the private sector, particularly former parts of the public sector now in the private sector, and when comparability is prayed in aid for the enormous salaries paid, one finds that, unlike in the schedule, we are not talking about five-figure numbers nor even six-figure numbers but, in many case, seven-figure numbers. I sincerely hope that the Minister does not intend to come back with further steps towards comparability that take us anywhere near such exceptional, excessive figures. Some of us do not accept the argument that comparability with the private sector should be the starting and the finishing point.

I want to say a little about the even less considered schedule 2, relating to the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition Chief Whip in the House of Lords, which involves a total expenditure of £117,000 and some pence. I think that I am quoting the Minister accurately when I say that he said that the measure affects only 26 Members of the House of Lords and so does not cost much. This

provision concerns only two Members of the House of Lords, and £117,000, by the Minister's standards, may not be much—perhaps a couple of hours' pay on the new rates that might come in with comparability. It pales into insignificance compared with the £500,000 paid by the Government to Her Majesty's Opposition in this place. It is certainly a modest figure compared with the amounts being paid here. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst says that it is worth every penny, but there might be several points of view on that.

Schedule 2 relates specifically to the official Opposition's role in the House of Lords and I assume that the constitutional reason for the money being paid—not the realpolitik reason—is to improve the effective scrutiny of the Government in that place and to achieve better legislation; otherwise, it is money completely down the drain. That £117,000 would be well worth it if it secured effective scrutiny and better legislation.

I was intrigued by the right hon. Gentleman's comment with regard to those being maximum figures and asking about the possibility of lesser amounts being paid to those two Members of the House of Lords. He asked who decides what money they should have. My response to that is, "He should be so lucky." These are the only two Opposition Members in the House of Lords to receive Government support. The arithmetic and the reality of the House of Lords is that there are two Opposition parties.

I look forward on a future occasion to speaking on and voting for an order that more accurately reflects the political reality and democratic facts in the House of Lords and here in relation to the financing of Opposition parties.

3.28 pm

**Mr. Stephen Twigg:** I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Mr. Forth) and the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Stunell) for their support of the order. I am sure that we can maintain this cross-party consensus between the two Front Benches. The right hon. Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight) is not here now, but I reaffirm what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said earlier in welcoming him to the shadow Front-Bench team.

I am advised that the terminology that suggests that a lesser amount might be paid is because a Minister may decide not to draw the salary, or not to draw the full salary. There is no suggestion that the Government would award a salary increase to Ministers but deprive the Opposition spokespeople of either all or part of the salary increase. If the order is agreed today, it will apply across the board. *[Interruption.]* I hear cries of "Shame" behind me. I am losing votes rapidly, but no doubt the Opposition will be happy with that reassurance.

On securing comparability with the private and the wider public sector—a point raised by the spokespeople of both Opposition parties—the task is immensely difficult, which is why the House decided to parcel it off to the SSRB in the first place. When we discuss the reports, we need to consider the basis on which the SSRB made its calculations. Over recent years, significant progress has been made in dealing with a situation that was unacceptable. People who were taking on major government responsibilities as Ministers were not having that recognised in the salaries made available to them.

The hon. Member for Hazel Grove made a bid for money for those on the Liberal Democrat Front Bench in the House of Lords. Clearly, that is not covered in the order, but it is a contribution that could be made to the continuing debate on the future character of the upper Chamber.

**Mr. Forth:** I hope that in any review of such a matter, the Minister and his colleagues will judge how far the Liberal party is a party of opposition or an adjunct of the Government. That would largely inform the extent to which it might be worth paying Liberal Members in this House or the other as pseudo-Ministers or an inadequate Opposition.

**Mr. Twigg:** I do not believe that there is any question of the Liberal Democrats joining the Government as Ministers in this place or the upper House. I will not be drawn into that discussion, or I may lose the limited support that I still have from Government Back Benchers.

The measure is a sensible one, implementing a proposal from the SSRB. To complete my answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove, it is important that the increase applies to the two Members from the Conservative Opposition in the other place, to allow effective scrutiny and debate. The proposal is modest, it will not cost a great deal, and I hope that we can agree it this afternoon.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 2001, which was laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.

## Christopher Rochester

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Stringer.]*

3.32 pm

**Mr. Kevan Jones** (North Durham): I am grateful for the opportunity to highlight the case of my late constituent, Mr. Christopher Rochester. Christopher was a young man of 24, born and raised in Chester-le-Street in my constituency. Like thousands of young people every year, he travelled to the island of Rhodes in June last year for a summer break.

Christopher travelled to stay with his brother Keith, who had been working on the island. He was a bright, intelligent young man, educated at the Hermitage school and New college, Durham. He had all to live for. He travelled to Rhodes from Newcastle airport on 7 June last year, waved off by his mother. He telephoned her the following day to say that he had arrived safely, the weather was lovely and he was happy to be with his brother Keith. He told his mother that he loved her and promised to ring on Sunday 11 June.

Christopher never made that telephone call. By then, sadly, he was lying dead in a Greek hospital mortuary. The call that his mother received was from his brother—a heart-breaking call, with the devastating and shattering news that Christopher was dead. Early that morning Christopher had been found at the foot of the balcony of the apartment in which he was staying in Falkari. He had fallen from the balcony on to the concrete patio below.

What followed for Christopher was a slow, painful, lingering death in the Andreas Papandreou hospital in Rhodes, and more than a year of appallingly cruel and tortuous treatment of his mother and family in their attempts to get answers as to why Christopher was allowed to die.

After being found lying bloodied and broken on the patio, Christopher had to wait 40 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Still conscious and being comforted by his brother Keith and friends, he was, in his brother's words, "shuffled" on to a stretcher and placed in the ambulance. Despite Christopher's complaints of severe back pain, no attempt was made to immobilise him or protect his neck. When he arrived at the Andreas Papandreou hospital in Rhodes town, he was received in the accident and emergency department and seen by a junior doctor. The doctor attended to Christopher's head wound and ordered x-rays to be taken of his back.

Christopher was in constant agonising pain, pleading to be given water to quench his thirst. His brother responded to his pleading by running backwards and forwards, his hands cupped full of water from a tap at the end of the room, while two members of staff stood by, casually smoking.

The x-rays were taken and a possible fracture to the coccyx was diagnosed. Christopher was admitted to an orthopaedic ward, still in severe pain, with a continuing deep thirst, and, by now, a large swelling on the lower part of his back. His brother Keith was told to go home. His friend David agreed to stay with Christopher. David sat next to his bed. Christopher was given an injection for his pain, but his thirst continued and again his pleas for water were ignored. It was left to his friend David to ferry cups of water from a water fountain in the corridor.

Pitifully, Christopher kept repeating to David that he thought he was going to die. David tried to reassure him that everything would be all right. David drifted off to sleep, only to be woken abruptly half an hour later by a nurse in an agitated state asking him to leave the ward. In his heart, David knew that something was seriously wrong.

The curtains around Christopher's bed were drawn. A female nurse emerged minutes later to tell him that Christopher was dead. David, grief-stricken by events, had the terrible task of telling Keith that his brother Christopher was dead. Keith then had the unimaginably difficult job of ringing his mother to tell her that her young son was no longer alive.

I have briefly described events that would have been traumatic for any family to cope with, but what I am about to tell the House adds to them in the most cruel and inhumane way. No compassion was shown to Christopher's brother Keith. Having been told that his brother was dead, he had to identify the body. He was shown into the hospital mortuary by an attendant who spoke no English. The attendant removed three bodies from their cabinets until, on the fourth occasion, Keith was shown his brother's body—a traumatic experience for someone already suffering the shock of bereavement.

Next, Keith was interviewed by the local police, and made to wait for two and a half hours in the kitchen of a police station, having had little or no sleep for the past 24 hours. The interview was aggressive and was conducted through an interpreter, a retired tour guide who spoke only broken English. The statement was written out in Greek and no attempt was made to translate it.

A week later, Christopher's body was flown home, having been released by the local Greek undertaker only after his mother, Pam Cummings, had borrowed £2,500 from the bank to cover the costs of transportation. Christopher, like so many, had no travel insurance. The body was taken to the University hospital in Durham. There the pathologist undertook a post mortem and discovered that Christopher's left kidney was missing. It had been retained by the Greek hospital. Distressed by this news, Christopher's mother contacted my predecessor, Giles Radice, who, with the invaluable assistance of the British consulate in Rhodes, got the Greek authorities to send the kidney back to the UK via the consulate in Rhodes.

When the kidney arrived at University hospital in Durham, for some unexplained reason Mrs. Cummings asked the local coroner to have it DNA tested. That was refused. Undaunted, she paid to have the kidney tested privately. To her horror, her suspicions were proved right: the kidney was not that of her son, Christopher. Now, more than a year on, Christopher's family still waits for answers, frustrated by the Greek authorities' refusal to respond to the most basic requests for information.

In an editorial on 15 January this year, the *Newcastle Journal* newspaper summed up the main questions that remain unanswered: first, did Christopher receive the correct treatment for his injuries; secondly, why was his kidney removed, and where is it now; and, thirdly, what action has been taken against those involved? On the first point, there is clear evidence that Christopher did not receive the proper treatment that we would expect in a modern European country.

Professor Redmond, who drew up a report for the local coroner in Durham, said:

"The management of the patient in this case fell far short of the very basic principles and constituted what I regard as gross medical negligence".

In his report, he criticised the Greek hospital authorities for ignoring the most basic of procedures. He said that, although the advance trauma life support procedure is used and recognised in Greece, it was not followed in this case and that, despite Christopher's being under the influence of alcohol, no attempt was made to conduct a thorough examination. Instead, it was used as an excuse for doing nothing. Christopher's thirst was clearly a sign that he was in shock and losing blood, but it was ignored. According to Professor Redmond,

"This was negligent. The patient was clearly desperately thirsty. He was in shock. He was bleeding to death and being ignored."

The negligence continued right up to the end. No attempt was made to resuscitate Christopher, even though, as Professor Redmond said,

"had resuscitation been instituted, even at this very late stage, he might have survived."

Clearly, the staff on duty that night at the Andreas Papandreou hospital in Rhodes displayed the most appalling negligence. For me, the most telling point from Professor Redmond's report was his conclusion:

"Had this patient been treated in this country then the likely outcome would have been that he would have survived".

No plausible explanation has been given as to why Christopher's left kidney was removed and retained in Greece. It would have been a vital piece of evidence in determining the cause of death and its omission has clearly hampered the pathologist who carried out the examination of Christopher's body in the UK. Mystery still surrounds the identity of the kidney sent to the UK and the whereabouts of Christopher's kidney. The only response from the Greek authority is that the correct kidney was given to the British consulate in Rhodes, implying that somehow it must have mixed it up with the no doubt large number of kidneys kept at the consulate. What a ludicrous notion.

On 25 and 26 July this year, an inquest was held in Durham into Christopher's death and the verdict given was accidental death contributed to by neglect. At the inquest, certain documents appeared for the first time. A report by the Papandreou hospital into the case names those responsible for the terrible treatment of Christopher. It says that Sergios Pavlidis, the trainee doctor on duty, failed to seek out the duty doctor or a specialist doctor to look at the patient and that Dr. George Karavolias, the emergency ward duty doctor, was in bed and left no instruction that he should be notified if an emergency was admitted. It also said that the two nurses on the orthopaedic ward failed to inform the duty doctor that Christopher had been admitted to the ward.

The same individuals were named in a second report produced at the inquest, this time by the public prosecutor's office in Rhodes. It had the telling words on the front cover, "Homicide as a result of negligence".

What has been the outcome? In short, we do not know. The family's attempts to get answers have been met with a wall of silence. I wrote to the Greek Ambassador on 3 September this year, but to date I have not even received an acknowledgement of my letter. Stephen Hughes, the Durham MEP, has made representations to the Greek health and justice ministers, but to date has had no replies.

The case that I have outlined is truly appalling. Respect must be paid to Mrs. Pam Cummings, Christopher's mother, and her family for the way in which they have tried with dignity to get answers but have been thwarted by a lack of co-operation from the Greek authorities.

According to the House Library, more than 2 million UK citizens visited Greece in 2000. Christopher Rochester was just one of those. Unlike others, he did not come back. Greece is not a third-world nation; it is a modern country and a member of the European Union, and we should expect decent health care if we fall ill while visiting. From the experience of Christopher Rochester, health care on Rhodes is clearly not adequate, and one would question whether it is safe for UK citizens to visit the island. The UK tourist trade to Greece in 1999 was worth £938 million. There should be an onus on both the Greek Government and UK tour operators to ensure that local medical services are of a higher standard than those on Rhodes.

Mrs. Cummings, a proud lady, knows that nothing will bring her son back, but if by highlighting this case she can prevent another mother from going through the torment that she has experienced, some good may have come out of Christopher's death. Clearly, the family wants answers to the questions that I have raised this afternoon. Any representation that the Minister can make on behalf of the family would be greatly appreciated in trying to bring this unhappy story to a close and finally allowing Christopher to rest in peace.

3.47 pm

**Mr. Tom Watson** (West Bromwich, East): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr. Jones) for allowing me time to contribute to this debate on an issue that is of great personal interest to me. I lost a close friend and employee on the island of Rhodes this August. Dominic McElroy was 26 years old and well known on the Labour Benches and within the Labour party as a lovable, charismatic, and tough-talking Yorkshireman.

At times of bereavement, family and loved ones enter a state of shock and are at their most vulnerable. In a different country and culture, they need as much guidance and support as they can get, not just from our officials abroad but from the travel companies that organise their package holidays. From my experience, I can only praise the role played by British consulate staff in Rhodes, whose behaviour was exceptional. They showed great sensitivity and tact in dealing with the bureaucracy involved with repatriating a British citizen.

The same was not true of the travel and insurance companies through which my friend had purchased his holiday, however. Dominic had booked his package holiday through Golden Sun Holidays, which I believe had a responsibility to deal with matters in the immediate aftermath of his death. His friends were obviously in a state of shock and grieving, yet they were not offered alternative accommodation and the bed sheets in the room in which Dominic stayed were not even changed. The standard of service that those young people, who were clearly in a state of shock, received was frankly not acceptable.

Dealing with the death of a close friend and having to go through the painful process of informing the parents are burdens enough in themselves, but then to deal with an unknown bureaucracy in a foreign country with a foreign language is simply too much for people to cope with when they are at their most vulnerable.

*[Mr. Tom Watson]*

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will help to put pressure on the travel industry to create an industry-wide set of guidelines that can be given to all holidaymakers who suffer such a tragic loss abroad. Cannot we establish a code of conduct to which holiday companies can subscribe, to help to unravel the complex procedures that are involved in repatriating a deceased British citizen? Dominic's friends had not only to talk to the British consulate, but to deal with the travel company and its representatives, the insurance company, insurance underwriters, undertakers, airports and local police. They also suffered an interrogation on Rhodes that was similar to the one my hon. Friend the Member for North Durham described.

It is simply not acceptable for the industry to allow grieving people to fend for themselves in unfamiliar territory. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will consider with our colleagues in Europe the establishment of an EU-wide set of guidelines to which the travel industry can subscribe. There have been many instances in which unnecessary bureaucracy has slowed down the burial of British citizens who have died abroad and prohibited families from grieving as they should in such tragic circumstances. It could be argued that the ability to bury one's loved one is a basic human right. I hope that he will take that point on board when he responds.

Dominic McElroy was a great man who was lost to his family tragically early, at the age of 26. They deserve so much more from the travel company from which he purchased his holiday. I hope that we can work to ensure that other people in such tragic circumstances do not have to undergo the pain and misery that Dominic's friends suffered last August.

3.52 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Ben Bradshaw):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr. Jones) on securing an Adjournment debate on this important topic. It is an indication of his commitment to his constituency that his first such debate is for the benefit and peace of mind of a family who live there. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson) on his contribution. I was pleased to hear his comments about the professionalism of the British consulate in Rhodes. I am not aware of the details of the case that he raised, but I shall certainly take on board his point about the need for EU guidelines for the travel industry in respect of bereavement cases. Sadly, I am not responsible for the travel industry, which is dealt with by another Department, but I point out that the Foreign Office produces a booklet called "Dealing with Death Abroad", which is distributed by embassies.

We were all disturbed to hear about the tragic death of Christopher Rochester in June 2000 and the ordeal of his bereaved family since then. To lose a young life is bad enough, but when it happens overseas and the circumstances are unclear, it must be much worse. On the death of a British citizen overseas, consular staff offer as much assistance as they can. Their primary role is to act as a liaison between the authorities in the country where the death has happened and the bereaved relatives, who are usually in the UK.

If a close relative is present in the country where a death has occurred, our consular staff do their best to assist them in making arrangements for local burial or cremation, or the return of the deceased to the UK. One rule prevails: the welfare of the bereaved relatives must always be paramount.

Let me turn to the specifics of Christopher's case, in which the unusual circumstances and developments overtook the regular pattern of consular activity following a death. Fortunately, as we have heard, Christopher's brother Keith was present and was able to act as a witness for the family. Christopher was returned to the UK relatively quickly and the coroner promptly drew the family's attention to his concerns about Christopher's treatment in hospital and to the findings of the Greek coroner in relation to the cause of his death. It was unusual for the British consulate to be asked to send on the kidney produced by the Greek authorities. Such matters would normally be the responsibility of international undertakers. To then find that the kidney did not belong to Christopher was as shocking for our consulate as it was for the coroner, and was devastating for the family. Our consulate in Rhodes and the embassy in Athens have passed on all messages, relayed questions and unofficially translated documents with great haste.

I am sorry to hear about my hon. Friend's difficulty in getting a response from the Greek ambassador in London. If he would like to speak to me about the matter after the debate, I can pass the message on to Baroness Amos, who is responsible for consular matters. I am sure that she will look into the matter for him.

By encouraging the British and Greek coroners to speak to one another, we hope that at least the question of the missing kidney will be resolved. Our consulate is continuing to press Mr. Stefis, the Greek coroner, to take the matter further, professional to professional, with his British counterpart, Mr. Tweddle. The British coroner has given his verdict of accidental death contributed to by neglect. We understand that, as we have heard, the family are proceeding with their case through the courts. We believe that the Greek police investigation papers have been passed to the public prosecutor. Our embassy in Athens will keep a careful eye on developments. Our consul met the public prosecutor and Mr. Stefis on 17 October, which is yesterday, to discuss progress on the case. Mr. Stefis awaits further photographs from the British coroner, Mr. Tweddle, and the public prosecutor expects to release his report on the allegations of malpractice at Rhodes hospital by the end of November. It is encouraging that the Greek Minister of Justice has also taken a personal interest in the case. He recently telephoned the public prosecutor to make inquiries.

We all hope that the case can be brought to a resolution as soon as possible. To prolong the distress of Christopher's family, especially at a time when bereaved relatives are very much in everyone's thoughts, would be unthinkable.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Four o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Friday 19 October 2001*

*The House met at half-past Ten o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Speaker's Statement

10.33 am

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a statement to make. Hon. Members will wish to know that the sitting of the House was delayed for an hour this morning on security advice while a suspect package received in the Members' Post Office was investigated. I understand that it is now safe for the Chamber to be used, although the Members Lobby must remain temporarily closed. Access to the Chamber will be by way of the doors behind the Chair. Of course I regret the inconvenience, but I am sure that Members will co-operate in their own and in the House's interests. As soon as things can be returned to normal, they will be.

## Points of Order

10.34 am

**Mr. Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you had any information as to whether the Government intend to come to the House today to make a statement about the staggering job losses announced at Rolls-Royce? It appears that some 3,800 people in the United Kingdom are to be thrown on to the dole queue. Surely a Minister should come to the House today to make a statement about that matter.

**Mr. Speaker:** I regret any job losses in any constituency. I have an affinity with Rolls-Royce. I once worked there and enjoyed the many years that I was employed there. I have received no information, but I am sure that information will come some time next week.

**Mr. David Cameron** (Witney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Has the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs asked to make a statement to the House this morning over the shambles of the four-year tests on sheep's brains that turned out to be cow's brains? As the defender of our rights, can you look into the fact that, although there were questions to her Department yesterday, that very important information was announced on its website at 10.30 pm?

Yesterday, the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said that there was a danger of contamination of the sample through bovine material. Instead of bovine answers such as that, should we not have a proper statement to the House about something that has gone very wrong? Whatever the respective merits of cow's brains and sheep's brains, clearly they are both bigger than Ministers' brains.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman and his Front-Bench colleagues can call for statements. I am sure that his concerns will be put on the record.

**Mr. Mark Francois** (Rayleigh): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you at all concerned by the fact that more than £200,000 of public money has been wasted over four years, and that that information was not even put out through a written parliamentary answer, but effectively buried on a website? Is that not an injustice to you and to the House?

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is seeking to draw the Chair into the argument. It is not a matter for the Chair.

## BILL PRESENTED

ADOPTION AND CHILDREN BILL

Mr. Secretary Milburn, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Blunkett, Mr. Secretary Murphy, Mrs. Secretary Liddell, Jacqui Smith and Ms Rosie Winterton, presented a Bill to restate and amend the law relating to adoption; to make further amendments of the law relating to children; to amend section 93 of the Local Government Act 2000; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday 29 October, and to be printed. Explanatory notes to be printed [Bill 34].

# Clean Fuels

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Stringer.]*

10.37 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Mr. David Jamieson):** I am pleased to open this clean fuels debate, because it is an area of Government policy that helps us to meet many of the targets that we have set ourselves for improving the lives of ordinary people.

Vehicles are critical to modern life, but have a major impact on our environment. In recent years, they have become much cleaner and safer, but those improvements need to go much further as we understand more about how vehicles affect the environment, including their impact on air quality, noise and the global problem of climate change.

I want to explain how the Government are supporting the wider use of cleaner fuels and vehicles both now and in the longer term to deliver more sustainable transport, but I shall start by explaining the Government's commitment to our environment, which sets the context for the debate. After all, cleaner fuels are not an end in themselves. They are needed to help us to meet our climate change, air quality and other environmental objectives.

Climate change is arguably the greatest environmental threat facing the planet. In the United Kingdom, road transport is the third largest source of emissions of carbon dioxide—the main greenhouse gas—causing about 22 per cent. of UK emissions. Measures to reduce $CO_2$ emissions from transport will clearly play a central role in helping us to meet our climate change objectives.

Conventional petrol and diesel vehicles are becoming more fuel efficient and thus emitting less $CO_2$ thanks to on-going efforts by vehicle manufacturers, backed by a voluntary agreement negotiated in Europe. Indeed, by 2008, the average new car sold in Europe should be 25 per cent. more fuel efficient than the average in 1995. However, more significant greenhouse gas reductions will be needed, given the prospective increase in road traffic both here and abroad. Cleaner fuels and new technologies will have a critical role in delivering those further reductions.

The Government are committed to improving the quality of the air that we all breathe, whether we are residents, pedestrians, cyclists or motorists. In support of that commitment, we have set tough air quality objectives to be met throughout the country over the next few years. Our air quality strategy, published in January 2000, identifies the major sources of air pollution in the United Kingdom and sets out a framework of action for delivering cleaner air. We propose to strengthen those objectives by setting even higher long-term objectives for particles and other key air pollutants.

As road transport is one of the major sources of air pollution, especially in urban areas, any attempt to improve air quality must consider measures to reduce pollution from transport. Road transport is also one of the major sources of two of the pollutants of most concern in the United Kingdom—particulates and oxides of nitrogen. Recent studies suggest that the impact of particulates on long-term health may be greater than we originally thought. That adds greater urgency to our efforts to reduce vehicle emissions.

Much is already being done. New petrol and diesel vehicles are becoming much cleaner, thanks to tougher European emission standards and cleaner fuels. For example, all petrol cars have been fitted with catalytic converters, which dramatically reduce emissions, for a number of years now. As a result of those and the other measures that we have taken, total emissions from transport are steadily declining, despite increases in road traffic.

Emissions of particulates and nitrogen compounds—sometimes known as PM10 and NOx—from road transport have fallen by about 50 per cent. since 1990, despite continuing traffic growth. Emissions from all vehicle types are expected to fall by another 25 per cent. over the next five years as a result of more stringent European emissions standards. That is a significant achievement, for which vehicle manufacturers and fuel suppliers deserve much credit. It also shows the added value of action at a European level. On their own, individual countries have only limited influence on the international car market; but through collective action, the European Union has driven forward improvements to vehicles with major benefits for safety and the environment.

**Mr. Andrew Turner** (Isle of Wight): The Minister has cited a number of European statistics and projections. Will he put those into the UK context?

**Mr. Jamieson:** Many of the agreements that we have made in recent years, some by negotiation and some by directive, through our co-operation in the European Union, have effected considerable improvements in standards for emissions and fuel, and in car safety. They have been brought about through co-operation with our partners in Europe. Had we been trying to negotiate them singly, as 15 separate countries, it is unlikely that we would have been able to deliver.

Car manufacturers also welcome that structure, which brings them benefits, too. In the past when they were selling cars in the European Union, they may have been trying to meet 15 different standards, whereas now they can be confident that they can produce vehicles that sell throughout the Union. The EU regulatory process takes account of the industry's views, and means that it has to meet only one set of standards to gain access to all the markets in Europe.

However, even with the improvements in European vehicle and fuel standards, our air quality objectives for particulates and nitrogen oxides may not be met in some urban pollution hot spots. Further measures to reduce emissions from road transport may be needed in those areas.

The other major environmental impact of vehicles is noise. There is some good news on that as well, as vehicles and engines become quieter and new road surfaces help to reduce tyre noise.

I am also interested in the prospect of encouraging more delivery vehicles to switch to natural gas, which cuts engine noise substantially. Local authorities may consider allowing such vehicles to deliver at more sensitive times—at night or in the early morning—which in turn would reduce daytime congestion.

The benefits for business and the environment, too, could be substantial. Using quieter lorries for night-time deliveries could enable companies to reduce their vehicle fleets by as much as 20 per cent. One company in north London is looking into precisely that, and says that if it could negotiate its way out of the curfew for using vehicles at night it could cut its fleet by one fifth, thus reducing congestion at the times when it normally delivers, as well as air pollution.

That is some of the environmental background. I shall now turn to what the Government are doing to promote cleaner fuels. We have encouraged cleaner forms of petrol and diesel. Leaded petrol was banned from general sale on 1 January 2000. Ultra-low sulphur diesel is now the standard form of diesel in the United Kingdom, thanks to the Government's fuel duty incentives. Sales of ultra-low sulphur petrol now make up almost 100 per cent. of total petrol sales. As I am about to explain, we are also encouraging alternatives to petrol and diesel, in particular gas fuels such as liquefied petroleum gas, which is known as LPG, compressed natural gas—CNG—and electric vehicles.

Compared with petrol, the best gas vehicles offer small reductions in emissions of oxides of nitrogen—NOx—and reductions in carbon dioxide emissions of 10 to 15 per cent. Gas vehicles also provide significant particulate and NOx emissions advantages over current diesel vehicles, as well as being much quieter. Gas will generally emit slightly more carbon dioxide than diesel vehicles, which are inherently fuel efficient.

Electric vehicles are zero-emission at the point of use, as well as being very quiet, making them ideal for use in urban areas where pollution problems are most acute. Although they have limited range and performance, they are well suited to applications such as urban delivery and courier work. I am sure that Members have noticed that some of the deliveries to this House are now made in electric vehicles.

Given these potential environmental benefits, the Government have introduced a range of incentives to encourage their wider use. Road fuel gases such as LPG and natural gas now enjoy a low duty rate of 9p per kilogram. That reflects the air quality benefits that gas vehicles can provide. The duty on road fuel gases will not be increased in real terms until 2004 at the earliest. Vehicles powered solely by electricity are exempt from vehicle excise duty—VED.

My Department's PowerShift programme provides grants towards the additional cost of buying gas and electric vehicles. I shall say a little more about PowerShift, as I announced some significant changes in the programme following a consultation exercise. The consultation set out a number of proposals about how PowerShift could be better targeted to maximise its environmental and health benefits. We received many useful suggestions, many of which have been incorporated into the programme.

On the LPG side of PowerShift, the most radical change that we have made to the programme is its extension to include older petrol vehicles up to five years old, whereas it previously applied only to vehicles up to one year old. There are potentially significant environmental benefits from converting older petrol vehicles to run on LPG. Compared with petrol, good LPG conversions can offer lower emissions of oxides of nitrogen and up to a 15 per cent. reduction in carbon dioxide. A wide range of PowerShift approved conversions are available, covering most of the major makes and models of what are known as Euro 2 cars—generally cars up to about five years old.

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): My hon. Friend will know that I have been closely involved in the debate about the use of gas, and one of the difficulties is the chicken-and-egg argument about whether cars are to be on the road before distribution points are available, or vice versa. In some parts of the country, there have been planning difficulties in the installation of gas distribution points at the fuel pumps. Is he satisfied that local authorities have now been given good enough advice on removing that obstacle?

**Mr. Jamieson:** I am very satisfied about the number of LPG stations opening around the country. There are 900 stations throughout the United Kingdom, and they are opening at a rate of one per working day. We hope that the 1,000th station will open in the new year. That means that anyone who converts to a dedicated LPG vehicle should find a supply readily accessible in almost all parts of the country. I would be happy to see any evidence of difficulties with planning permission that my hon. Friend may have.

**Mr. Bill Wiggin** (Leominster): I am curious as to what assurances the Minister can give us about what future taxation will be levied on LPG and whether the Chancellor's stealthy fingers will be dipping into our LPG tanks.

**Mr. Jamieson:** The hon. Gentleman makes a beguiling argument. I look forward to his Front-Bench spokesman making commitments beyond this Parliament. He made great play during the election campaign about not giving commitments beyond one Parliament. Although I cannot speak for the Chancellor, I can say that the Government are totally committed to cleaner air and the objectives that I set out earlier, and we have put in place fiscal measures to ensure that they are achieved. The PowerShift programme means that cars can be converted, and the oil companies have ensured that LPG is available. Those are clear indicators of the Government's commitment to seeing through our objectives. However, I will not be tempted to outline a Budget for 2004, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman really expects me to.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** How accessible will LPG be in rural areas, given that many rural filling stations are closing down and it can be difficult to obtain conventional diesel and petrol?

**Mr. Jamieson:** The hon. Gentleman's point has to do with the accessibility of all fuels in rural areas, not just LPG. That is of concern to us. For filling stations to stay open, it must be viable for the oil companies to use them.

A good friend of mine who lives in Cornwall—a rural area in which it can sometimes be difficult to access fuels—tells me that there are sufficient stations in Cornwall to enable him to go over to a dedicated LPG vehicle. My constituency is near Cornwall, and I know from my journey through Devon that one can travel

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through the whole of that very rural area and find LPG available. I see that the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Syms) agrees with me.

The really good news is that the programme to have LPG at filling stations is continuing apace, so it will be more widely available as time goes on. It is a chicken-and-egg situation: we now have the stations and we need more vehicles to start using LPG fuel. That is why the PowerShift programme encourages use of other types of car.

The grants available through the PowerShift programme will provide between 30 and 50 per cent. of the cost of conversion, depending on the emissions performance that is achieved by doing so. That is excellent news for the estimated 2 million motorists who will be eligible for financial assistance to help with the extra cost of converting their vehicles to run on cleaner LPG. They will also benefit from low-duty fuel that costs less than 40p per litre on the garage forecourts.

**Mr. Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire): Will the Minister clarify something? He said that gas conversions were particularly suitable for older vehicles, but an engine can be converted to run on gas only if it is at the outset capable of running on unleaded fuel. In other words, conversion is not an option for vehicles that run on lead replacement petrol because the gas does not have the quality to lubricate the head of the engine, as LRP does.

**Mr. Jamieson:** The thrust of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks is correct. However, the majority of vehicles will run on unleaded fuel, and they can be converted. The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the programme cannot embrace every vehicle. Some specialist vehicles will be difficult to convert; converting some will be so expensive as not to be economically worth while. However, there are packs to convert the average medium-sized vehicle, and engines have been manufactured to the required standard. Given that, this facility is available to the majority of motorists.

**Mr. Mark Francois** (Rayleigh): If I heard the Minister correctly, he said that the PowerShift grants may cover the cost of 30 to 50 per cent. of conversion. My understanding was that until recently they could, in some circumstances, cover up to 75 per cent. of the cost of conversion. Is he announcing that as a result of the consultation the amount that can be covered has been cut?

**Mr. Jamieson:** No, I am not announcing it here. There was an announcement last week, which was made available to the House, that we had made some changes. The grant system that was in place, which was largely formulated by the previous Government—this is not a criticism, because we agreed—was focused on converting newer vehicles. At the time, that was the right policy. However, in the interim, newer, cleaner engines and cleaner fuel became available and the advantage of converting newer vehicles to LPG reduced. The emissions advantage of converting a brand-new vehicle coming out of the factory was limited, so the gap had narrowed. After the consultation, many people rightly said that we needed to refocus on the older vehicles, so the grant has moved away from newer, cleaner vehicles to older, more polluting vehicles. We have also given the manufacturers an extra incentive to put the grant at the point of manufacture rather than the point of conversion. I will come to that shortly.

Important changes were announced for LPG conversions of new vehicles by offering additional incentives for production-line conversions and for new LPG vehicles replacing diesel vans and taxis. At present, LPG conversions are done as after-market conversions. The petrol vehicle is taken to a garage and converted, sometimes very soon after it has come from the production line. Although many such conversions deliver good environmental performance, the process is labour intensive and consequently relatively expensive. We want to see a move away from after-market conversions to production-line LPG vehicles, which should reduce costs and improve reliability and environmental performance.

Giving higher grants for such vehicles gives a clear signal that the Government want to move in that direction. We have moved the emphasis of the funding to those areas in which we think the greatest advantage will be achieved. The grants will range from 50 to 60 per cent. of the cost of conversion, depending on the emissions performance. Higher grants for LPG vans and taxis reflect the significant air quality benefits to be obtained by replacing diesels with LPG. LPG offers reduced emissions of harmful particulates and oxides of nitrogen compared with diesels, as well as being much quieter.

With the additional incentives offered through PowerShift, I expect the number of LPG vehicles to grow significantly over the next few years from its current level of around 50,000. Thanks to the investment from fuel suppliers, the LPG refuelling infrastructure is also developing rapidly. As I said, there are already 900 LPG filling stations nationwide, with one opening every working day. By the end of next year, we expect around 10 per cent. of all petrol stations to be able to supply LPG, making it a practical fuel for most motorists.

**Mr. Robert Syms** (Poole): Italy has more than 1 million vehicles that run on LPG. Even the Netherlands has more than 400,000. When does the Minister think that we will catch them up?

**Mr. Jamieson:** That is difficult to predict. Many of us hoped that the market for LPG and CNG would grow. In Italy, there has been much greater take-up of CNG. We are putting the incentives in place. We have the infrastructure of supply in place. We have in place the fiscal encouragement to go ahead and convert. Hon. Members can go out and proselytise on behalf of cleaner fuels in their constituencies, because those fuels deliver cleaner air and the other objectives that I have set out.

It is true to say that LPG cars and vans have taken off in a big way. We are seeing further developments each day. The difficulty is that the news is not so good for the heavier gas vehicles such as trucks and buses. Despite the range of incentives on offer, operators have been reluctant to switch from diesel to gas. I intend that we should change that rapidly. Gas offers many advantages to the heavy vehicle operator. It is cheap and clean and the vehicles are reliable. Many fuel suppliers are happy to install the refuelling infrastructure free of charge, so refuelling need not be a problem.

To give operators the confidence to invest in cleaner vehicles and refuelling infrastructure, I announced recently that PowerShift grants for heavy duty gas

vehicles would be maintained at their current levels of up to 75 per cent. of the additional cost of the vehicle. This grant level is also mirrored in CleanUp—PowerShift's sister programme that focuses on reducing pollution from existing vehicles.

My Department has set up two pilot initiatives with the London Mayor and Transport for London and with Manchester city council, with the aim of getting prospective compressed natural gas users and suppliers together. We believe that this partnership approach could encourage many transport operators in those two cities to invest in natural gas. If it is a success, we intend to roll it out to other towns and cities. Perhaps the hon. Member for Poole and others will watch that with great interest. If we achieve success in London and Manchester, perhaps smaller towns and cities will go over to a similar programme. We may see vehicles such as Royal Mail delivery vans and other vehicles that operate within a limited radius using natural gas.

Gas fuels such as LPG and CNG offer an immediate way of reducing vehicle emissions, in particular local air pollutants, but they do not do much to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. For that reason, the Government are also thinking about the next generation of fuels. I must stress that the role of the Government is not to pick winners in terms of fuels or technologies but to take a more strategic view of where we want to get to with environmental outcomes. Industry can then develop the appropriate fuels and technologies to deliver the outcomes that we want.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington): I suspect that the Minister is about to leave the subject of LPG. Before he does, will he reassure one of my constituents that there should be no safety concerns about new LPG refilling plants being opened close to residential properties?

**Mr. Jamieson:** I can give the hon. Gentleman that reassurance. LPG, properly fitted in a refuelling station or a vehicle, is probably safer than petrol. Many people ask whether the tank, which unfortunately tends to look like a bomb, is safe. The tank is built to resist considerable pressure, so it is much safer in the event of an accident than the conventional petrol tank. In road accidents, the ignition of the petrol and the fire that ensues causes many deaths. People can be assured that with both CNG and LPG, the likelihood of the tank rupturing and the fuel escaping is less.

**Mr. Syms:** I agree with what the Minister said about safety, but there is a knotty little issue in that vehicles are not allowed to go through the channel tunnel with full LPG tanks, whereas caravans with full calor gas tanks are allowed to go through. Have further representations been made on that point?

**Mr. Jamieson:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter. He can be assured that it is in my in-tray. We have received representations and we are considering the matter.

Let us consider what outcomes we want. What is the ultimate destination? As I said, our longer-term emphasis will be on low-carbon technologies, given the potential impact of climate change on our environment. Security of supply is also important, since fossil fuels such as gas and oil are a finite resource, and we cannot rely on them to power our transport system for ever.

That is the destination, but how do we get there? The simple answer is that there are many different routes to achieving what we want. Cleaner conventional fuels will still have a vital role to play. For example, discussions are taking place in Europe about making effectively zero-sulphur petrol and diesel widely available in member states, potentially by 2005. Such fuels should help manufacturers to introduce a new generation of fuel-efficient engines. Many manufacturers are developing hybrid electric vehicles that use two types of power source together to maximise the benefits of each. For example, a petrol or diesel engine and electric motor can be combined to maximise fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. The system can offer twice the fuel efficiency of a conventional vehicle, with only half the carbon dioxide emissions, with air pollution benefits in the most polluted areas.

**Mr. Miller:** As far back as 1993, Ricardo's of Shoreham showed the Science and Technology Committee a prototype hybrid engine designed for heavy vehicles. Unfortunately, it has not yet found its way on to the road, even though it is a leading piece of technology. Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the fiscal incentives are in place to promote such technology?

**Mr. Jamieson:** The fiscal incentives are in place. It is unfortunate that the technology tends to be more expensive and the market tends to be conservative. It is difficult to persuade the purchasers of vehicles to make the appropriate changes. Having driven one of the hybrid vehicles, I can tell my hon. Friend that it was very satisfactory. It delivered about 60 miles per gallon, whereas a similar petrol vehicle would probably deliver about 35 mpg. Hybrid vehicles are already commercially available in the UK. Toyota and Honda offer hybrid electric petrol vehicles for sale, and other manufacturers are likely to follow. The Government are supporting the introduction of hybrid vehicles with purchase grants of £1,000 through the PowerShift programme.

Hydrogen and biofuels, which can, crucially, start to decouple mobility from climate change, will also form part of this journey. They are practical and can replace or be blended with fossil petrol and diesel in existing engines.

For biofuels, the carbon saving, compared with fossil fuel, is highest where the biofuel is made with waste or recycled material and less when the feed stock is specially grown, using fertilisers and energy. We intend this country to be a leader in biofuel technologies. The Chancellor launched the greener fuels challenge in last year's pre-Budget report, to identify the most promising fuels for special tax treatment. That led to the 20p per litre reduction in duty for biodiesel in the Budget. That will bring forward biodiesel produced in the UK with used vegetable oil.

I am aware of the arguments that there should be an even larger duty cut for biodiesel, to open the way for biodiesel made from virgin rapeseed, and that biodiesel duty should be on a par with LPG or CNG. The issue was fully dealt with in the Finance Bill debate.

As my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary explained, the prime purpose of the low duty on LPG and CNG is to help combat air-quality problems, whereas experts generally agree that biodiesel is not better than fossil

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diesel on the most important emissions. Rapeseed biodiesel offers some carbon savings compared with fossil diesel, but fairly limited benefits because of the amount of fertilisers and energy involved in growing rapeseed. It is also expensive. Other biofuels deliver greater environmental benefits at a lower cost, and they are already starting to be used in the electricity and industrial sectors.

Looking yet further ahead, we have the firm prospect of electric-drive vehicles running on fuel cell technology. That opens the way for a clutch of benefits: higher vehicle efficiency; better in-car amenities; zero-tailpipe emissions; lower carbon emissions; and inherently low carbon emissions when the hydrogen is renewably generated.

We want this country to be out in front in the development of all those new fuels and the associated technologies. The potential for job and wealth creation is significant, and the United Kingdom is well placed to benefit, with a strong manufacturing base and expert design engineering capabilities. All this activity is supported by about 50 universities and other centres of excellence in the United Kingdom. They are involved in providing education and advanced research into all aspects of vehicle, powertrain, component and materials engineering.

In November, my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry will produce a discussion document—"Powering future vehicles"—in which we will set out our strategy not only for promoting the development, introduction and take-up of fuel cell and other new technologies, but for ensuring that the United Kingdom automotive industry is fully engaged in the technology.

I hope that I have explained the importance that the Government place on cleaner fuels as a means of supporting our environmental objectives in the short and longer terms. I have touched on many issues in my speech, which, I hope, will provoke a strong and healthy debate today.

11.12 am

**Mr. Malcolm Moss** (North-East Cambridgeshire): May I begin by offering an apology to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the House for my not being able to stay for the full length of the debate to hear the winding-up speeches? I am afraid that that is a result of the late change in business and constituency commitments, which I cannot alter at this stage.

We welcome this debate, even if the subject is not particularly pertinent to the moment. It is not acceptable for the Home Office to claim pressure of work to put off the drugs debate that was earmarked for today. Obviously, the Government do not have much good news to promote, hence this subject has been lifted off the shelf for this morning's debate.

**Mr. Miller:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the drugs debate is very important, but two major surveys have shown that air quality is the biggest single issue in the minds of my constituents—they live in a petrochemical manufacturing town.

**Mr. Moss:** The hon. Gentleman makes his point. We agree that this is a very important issue, and I have welcomed the fact that we are debating it, but we know the circumstances in which this debate has been initiated. Some people may have thought it much more appropriate to use this parliamentary time to debate more contemporary subjects, such as the current international crisis or the collapse of Railtrack. The Minister is from the relevant Department, and given the situation that has arisen in the past week, I should have thought it more appropriate now for him to explain how the Government propose to fill the black holes in their financing of the railway industry in the future.

May I connect the correct security concerns with today's debate by asking the Minister whether he is aware that there are only eight oil refineries in Great Britain? If last year's fuel crisis taught us anything, it is that it does not take much to prevent distribution from those refineries, thus causing a national fuel shortage. What assessment has the Minister made of the threat of terrorist action against some or all those refineries? Can he assure us that the same security measures that are being put in place at reservoirs and nuclear power stations are being used to protect those refineries from threat?

To return to today's business, I assure the Minister that the Opposition welcome any sensible measures that encourage greener fuels and greener vehicles. We were disappointed that, despite promising in 1997 they would be "the greenest Government ever", it took this Government more than three years to announce a tax cut for ultra-low sulphur petrol, but we welcome their eventual decision. Members will recall that tax breaks introduced by Conservative Governments helped to encourage the shift away from leaded petrol to unleaded, and we welcome the fact that the Government are following in our footsteps. Can the Minister tell us whether the Government plan to go even further and encourage the production of no-sulphur fuels? What fiscal measures are the Government considering to speed the introduction of that even greener fuel?

We also welcome the tax cuts that the Government have made to compressed natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Green) was one of the first to suggest in the previous Parliament that tax on LPG and CNG should be cut to the lowest minimum EU level. The Minister should give the House a firmer assurance than he did in response to an intervention made by my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Wiggin) about the Government's ambition to maintain the tax on those clean fuels at that minimal level for the long term, not just until 2004, as the Chancellor has suggested. Converting cars to run on cleaner fuels can be a costly and bureaucratic business, as we all know, and consumers need to know that they are making an investment that the Government will defend in the longer term.

The Minister is, no doubt, aware that the number of vehicles that run on LPG, and particularly CNG, is still very small in this country—a point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight). As the Minister confirmed, about 50,000 vehicles run on LPG in this country, but there are nearly 10 times that number in Holland. What strategy do the Government have to encourage a greater take-up of LPG at petrol stations, particularly in rural areas?

The Minister said that 900 such stations already exist and are opening at the rate of one a week, but that is small beer compared with the availability of conventional petrol

and diesel at our stations. What discussions has the Minister had with the motor industry to ensure that more LPG vehicles are put onto the market, so that buyers do not have to arrange separate conversions? Do the Government have any targets regarding the number of vehicles that can run on LPG?

I thank the Minister for expanding on the measures that the Government intend to introduce to promote biofuels, which do not add to global warming. The EU proposes that 2 per cent. of road transport fuels should be biofuels by 2005. Does he intend to meet that target and, if so, how? Again, my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford proposed that biodiesel should be taxed at the same rate as road fuel gases. Will the Minister consider such a proposal?

Looking even further ahead, Conservative Members are keen to encourage a whole range of alternative-fuel vehicles, such as dual fuel, solar, electric and fuel-cell powered cars. We proposed a cut in vehicle excise duty for those vehicles, and I hope the Minister will put pressure on the Chancellor to consider such a cut in his next Budget. Hon. Members will be aware that the Government have decided to change the current system and band VED for new vehicles according to four $CO_2$ emissions rates. I understand the sentiment behind that policy decision, but why should it be based only on $CO_2$ emissions? Would it not be better to discourage all air pollution by basing VED rates on the total emission standards of vehicles? I should be grateful for an explanation of the Government's thinking on that decision, especially in relation to company cars.

As the Minister will accept, company cars are among the most environmentally friendly vehicles on our roads. The Government plan to abolish mileage allowances and use $CO_2$ emissions to calculate taxation levels that will hit the pockets of those who need to use their cars for business. For example, a sales manager running a 1.9 litre diesel car, which costs about £21,000 to put on the road, and who drives 25,000 business miles a year, will have to pay between £800 and £950 of extra tax a year. That stealth tax is certainly not helping British manufacturing and industry.

Is not the Minister aware that, for many, a company car is a vital tool for business and public transport is simply not an option? I hope that the Government change their mind and realise that the job of company car fleet management is an integral part of our economy, not an evil to be rooted out. The Minister should be working with the fleet industry to encourage it to take up cleaner LPG vehicles, not hitting it with a new tax.

**Mr. Miller:** Given that company cars are replaced, on average, every two or three years, does not the hon. Gentleman think that the sales manager to whom he referred should be encouraging his employer—or, if he himself is in an executive position, making the decision—to shift away from using a 1.9 litre diesel to a more environmentally friendly car?

**Mr. Moss:** The hon. Gentleman's comments would have a little more integrity if the purpose of the tax were to bring about that shift, but we well know that it is just another stealth tax to add to the Chancellor's coffers.

As the Minister knows, old cars cause the majority of vehicle air pollution. Cars produced after 1997 emit only 4 per cent. of the hydrocarbons, 9 per cent. of the nitrogen oxides and 10 per cent. of the carbon monoxide emitted by a pre-1993 car. When are the Government going to do something about the real polluters? Banding VED rates to reflect the total environmental impact of cars will provide a strong, positive incentive in the tax system for people to upgrade to cleaner cars, which will significantly cut air pollution throughout the country.

Of course, the most polluting vehicles on our roads are buses and HGVs. Buses emit 68 times more nitrogen oxides and 37 times more particulates than an equivalent car. Oxford street is probably the most polluted street in the country, and there are no cars travelling on it. Even the Mayor of London has been forced to admit that his congestion tax will not reduce pollution in central London. Conservative Members would be grateful to learn what measures the Minister will take to reduce bus pollution.

The Conservative party firmly believes that transport policy should be shaped by environmental concerns, but we do not believe that an anti-car agenda, which many Labour Members are bent on, is the way forward. Many people have to use their cars because, for them, public transport is just not an option. The sensible approach would therefore be to cut taxation on greener fuels and cars, not try to tax people out of their cars. We welcome the fact that the Government have now started to get that message, and we hope that they continue to make constructive proposals to encourage greener motoring.

11.23 am

**Joan Ruddock** (Lewisham, Deptford): In opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister concentrated on cleaner fuels for transport, acknowledging the contribution of transport to climate change, which he described as the greatest environmental threat facing us. Prior to 11 September, climate change was the imperative driving the development of cleaner fuels. Air pollution and local environment degradation were obviously significant concerns, but it was the acceptance by the international community that global warming was upon us that gave the spur to low-carbon and non-carbon technologies.

After 11 September, no debate on clean fuels can ignore the security implications of current energy supplies and suppliers. Before that date, the nuclear industry was once again presenting itself as a clean technology and part of the fight against climate change. That was, of course, not true. We already have 10,000 tonnes of highly dangerous nuclear waste stored in the UK awaiting someone to find a solution to the problem of its disposal, and 500,000 tonnes of such waste are destined to be produced by existing nuclear capacity. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs told the House that the cost of dealing with nuclear waste was about £85 billion, but that is as nothing compared with the obvious threat posed by terrorist action. We cannot begin to comprehend what the consequences would have been if the terrorist targets in the United States had been not the twin towers but nuclear power plants.

Our nation and our way of life are unsustainable without fuel for manufacturing, heating, transport, lighting and all public services. Today, more than ever, we cannot simply accept that it will come out of a pump or a tap or emerge at the flick of a switch. Suddenly, our

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military and environmental security have become closely interlinked and the imperative for change has rapidly accelerated.

The Government are undertaking an energy review, the preamble to which expresses their concerns about the following matters: ensuring diversity of supply, so that the UK is not dependent on one source; ensuring security of supply, because much of the UK's oil and gas comes from areas of political instability; meeting our environmental obligations to reduce $CO_2$ by 20 per cent. on 1990 levels by 2010 and by up to 60 per cent. by 2050; and the social consequences of high energy prices.

I do not intend, and it would be inappropriate in this debate, to set out a comprehensive response to that review, but I recommend the response made by SERA, Labour's Environment Campaign. It argues for bringing energy efficiency and combined heat and power into the mainstream of energy policy, with proper funding, a policy framework, and recognition that they contribute to all the main policy goals: competitiveness, reducing fuel poverty, increasing energy security and reducing emissions. The campaign also argues against any new nuclear power plants and is in favour of a comprehensive strategy for renewable energy. It is on those points that I wish to concentrate.

The key to the review must be diversity and security of supply. The natural assumption might be that there is some equivalence between the sectors—nuclear, coal, oil, gas and renewables—each having its place in the future, with mere shifts in the balance between them. However, there is another way for us to meet both fuel and security needs. First, we should decide once and for all that nuclear power has had its day in this country. We should spend no more time on future fantasies about nuclear power and get on with the job of dealing with the colossal output of nuclear waste. There is no economic or environmental case for new nuclear plants, and those that we have must now be regarded as a major terrorist target.

Secondly, we should ask whether we can obtain diversity and security of supply from the basket of renewable energy sources. All the evidence suggests that we can. Onshore wind, offshore wind, wave and solar energy each provide a resource sufficient to supply all the UK's power, if we choose to harness it. I acknowledge that progress has been made and that the Government have kept the promise on renewables that they made in opposition. They have increased funding, and there are incentives, but there is nothing on the scale that will enable us to meet all future energy needs from benign, clean and renewable resources.

The Minister gave us a comprehensive picture of the range of cleaner transport fuels that are available and of the incentives that the Government have provided. He accurately described what I regard as a transitional period. He is, of course, aware that all our efforts represent a constant battle. The positive reductions in emissions from each vehicle are offset by the increasing number of vehicles on the road and the fact that they are used more often. For that reason, we cannot treat transport fuels in isolation, and renewable energy sources provide the key to the future.

The potential for renewables is vast. BP has calculated that if modern solar photovoltaic technologies were applied to all appropriate roofs they would generate more electricity from this nation wide than we use in a single year. A recent performance and innovation unit study accepts that wind farms using only a small amount of the areas available to them and the use of available wave power could double current national demand.

Biomass power plants could balance the grid's need for constancy of supply and hydrogen fuel cells could provide the means of mass storage of energy. Hydrogen fuel cells and batteries mean that photovoltaics and other renewables will become centrally relevant to transport and oil. Hon. Members will know that hydrogen fuel can be made from water using solar and other renewable energy sources, thus completing a virtuous circle. Battery cars, chargeable from renewables, are already available. All those technologies are feasible, but they require a great leap of imagination, a real change of direction and, of course, the investment and incentives appropriate to the new imperatives.

The Government have said that they want our embryonic solar PV industry to be able to compete on a par with those of Germany and Japan. In the past year, about £16 million of grants have been allocated to that industry and more is promised from the additional £100 million for renewable energies beginning in 2002. That is just a fraction of what is available to our competitors. BP and Shell have estimated that it would take 15,000 roofs—equivalent to 30 MW a year—before manufacturing that product would be justified in the UK. Solar Century estimates that by 2004-05 the UK capacity will be only 10 MW, based on the Government's known programme. By comparison, 30 MW was obtained in the fourth year of the Japanese programme and in the second year of the German programme.

The company Solar Century has undertaken to fit 63 solar power plants, which have mainly been put on buildings around the UK in the past 18 months. It has five proposals that could transform the industry. First, it believes that the Government should support the UK's solar grant resource at a level equivalent to that of Germany and Japan. Secondly, it contends that the renewables obligation could be varied to place a solar obligation on industry for 1 per cent. of its renewable supply or 0.1 per cent. of its total supply by 2010. Thirdly, it thinks that planning authorities could be encouraged to require a proportion of PV on developments, as the Mayor of London has suggested for new buildings in the capital. Does my hon. Friend's Department plan to encourage planning authorities to require a proportion of their local and regional developments to include photovoltaics?

Solar Century's fourth proposal is to extend the Government's programme of enhanced capital allowances. Should not that be extended to photovoltaics in an effort to grow the market? Fifthly, it suggests that major oil companies could be required to spend a proportion of their profits on large-scale PV manufacturing. Once such plants were built, a self-sustaining market would emerge. My hon. Friend will be aware that the recent huge profits made by oil companies have led to calls for windfall taxes. Does he agree that a better solution would be for the Government actively to incentivise companies to invest a percentage of those profits in the manufacture of renewable energies?

I welcome my hon. Friend's announcement that in November the Government will publish a paper on powering future vehicles. That is long overdue. Perhaps he agrees that hydrogen fuel cells offer the best solution

for the automotive industry. If so, does he believe that the development of photovoltaics should be accelerated as a critical route to the generation of hydrogen fuel?

The automotive industry, the oil industry and the green movement agree on two fundamental points: that the long-term use of petrol and diesel is not a sustainable option and that the ultimate fuel solution is hydrogen generated from renewable energy. The international community rightly perceives two enormous threats to global security and the environment—climate change and international terrorism. Our national energy review could not come at a more critical time. The right decisions taken now could transform our energy supply by the middle of the century, contributing not only to the international good but to the improvement of our environment, domestic comforts and security. It is an opportunity that we must not miss.

11.37 am

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington): First, I, too, apologise for having to leave before the end of the debate because of appointments that could not be rescheduled.

I welcome the debate but I am intrigued by its purpose and especially its timing. I listened carefully to the Minister and had great difficulty in finding anything in his speech that had not been announced in the Budget statement in March. The only change is that the "Powering future vehicles" consultation paper will be delivered in November, not in the summer as promised in the Budget. I am a little disappointed because there has been no progress since March. Instead, there has been a slippage in the publication of one consultation paper.

We agree that transport has a huge impact on the environment because of the greenhouse gases and local air pollutants that it generates. We certainly support the promotion of technologies to improve vehicle efficiency and the use of alternative fuel systems such as liquefied petroleum gas and, in the longer term, biofuels and zero-emission vehicles.

The debacle surrounding Railtrack and plans for the partial privatisation of London Underground have led me to question whether those developments will make a positive contribution to the modal shift that is desired. I suspect that they are going to have the opposite effect and that people will switch from public transport to their cars rather than from cars to public transport. However, the Minister made some positive comments and there are desirable developments in the air quality strategy, which are welcome.

In the Budget statement in March, the Chancellor announced several initiatives, prompted in part by responses to the Government's green fuel challenge. It is worth reminding hon. Members of what was said. The Government said that they would support pilot projects for hydrogen, methanol, bioethanol and biogas with duty reductions or exemptions, and would consult this summer to encourage the development, delivery and uptake of newer, alternative, greener fuels and technologies. However, as I said, the "Powering future vehicles" consultation paper will not be delivered until November. Six months on, it is worth taking stock of the progress that has been made on the promises of support that were given in March.

I hope that the Minister will be able to confirm how, in the past six months and in the future, the Government's performance measured and will measure up to Greenpeace's response to the Government's green fuel challenge. Greenpeace pushes harder, further and faster than any Government would desire, but I believe that the Government will get to the time frame that Greenpeace wants in the longer term. I will therefore remind the Minister of what it seeks.

Greenpeace believes that the aim should be to install 250 compressed natural gas—CNG—refuelling points, but there were no targets for such refuelling points in the statement in March. Will the Minister tell us whether there is a target for increasing their number? By how many more does he expect the number to increase over the next 12 months and over the term of this Parliament? According to Greenpeace, there are only 20 CNG refuelling points in the country. Even a change in the duty is unlikely to have any effect on the uptake of CNG, therefore, because very few people will be able to get to the 20 existing points.

Greenpeace called for grants for the conversion costs for 5,000 freight vehicles and for 25,000 cars a year. It will be interesting to learn how Government figures tie in with such an ambitious target. It also called for incentives for the installation of electricity refuelling points. Clearly, that is not within the Government's remit; it is something that local government can do. Presumably, however, the Government have given the matter some thought.

There may be concerns that electric vehicles result in the displacement of pollution, because they are supplied by electricity generated at a power station. Renewable energies can be used, however, and I invite the Minister to visit a residential development in my constituency—the Beddington zero energy development project—where, once the development is complete, a scheme will provide for a pool of electric cars to be powered by photovoltaics. That is a good example of how one can obtain complete sustainability in a development. Does the Minister have any views as to how many electricity refuelling points there should be after the next 12 months and at the end of this Parliament?

The Government talk about the need to take further steps along the road towards a hydrogen-based economy. Unless there is a distribution network for the hydrogen, I am not sure that it will be possible to take steps down that road. I do not know why the Minister shakes his head, because I have referred directly to what was said in the March statement. Do the Government have plans to install a hydrogen network and, if so, what is the time frame in which it will be rolled out?

On LPG, I thank the Minister for confirming that refuelling points and the fuel tanks in vehicles should present no safety concerns. I shall pass on that information. However, has he considered whether vehicles running on LPG should be subject to congestion charges? That is a matter of current debate.

In the statement, the Government talk about looking in the medium term towards bioethanol and biogas. How would the British Association for Biofuels and Oils rate the Government's proposals? It called for a tax derogation for biofuels of 7.5p per litre. Is the Minister able to give us any information about incentives?

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** The hon. Gentleman asked the Minister about congestion charges. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether he thinks LPG-driven vehicles should be exempt from congestion charges?

**Tom Brake:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that point. There needs to be way of determining the extent to which

*[Tom Brake]*

the LPG nature of a dual-fuelled car is used. Unless that can be established, it will be difficult to determine whether a dual-fuelled car is being used permanently in the LPG mode or permanently in the petrol-driven mode. I am pleased that the Mayor of London and his team will have responsibility for clarifying that point and resolving the dilemma.

**Mr. Jamieson:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised this point. As he can imagine, it is exercising our minds as well as his, and he is having almost as much difficulty as we are. Many LPG conversions are carried out under railway arches and some of them are not done well. Could he help the Government by telling us how we might distinguish between the good and the bad conversions? Might we not encourage something undesirable if we were to give a blanket exemption to all LPG vehicles?

**Tom Brake:** I am pleased that the Minister seeks my assistance. I also seek his and that of his Department, because I am sure that it has considered the issue. I look forward to the Minister and his friend the Mayor of London resolving the dilemma between them.

I referred to bioethanol. There is potential for it to be developed as a relatively clean fuel in agriculture, and it can assist in combating global warming. It could play an important role in restoring our ailing farming industry.

Will the Minister set out the extent of the support that will be given to the pilot projects that were referred to in the March statement? Will the Government support a set number of projects, and will a budget be allocated in each year of this Parliament to support them? Have they set a ceiling for the special duty reductions or exemptions that will be available? Will they perhaps provide support in other ways, such as consultancy advice and secondments?

The Minister must think through the changes carefully and his thinking needs to be joined up in a way that it is perhaps not in relation to the electricity industry. It appears that the Government's plans for fighting global warming will be jeopardised by the new rules for the buying and selling of electricity. They will have a heavy impact on renewable energy and on combined heat and power.

This has been a useful debate and I regret the fact that I will not be able to stay for the Minister's winding-up. I hope, however, that he will respond to my questions. If not, I shall undoubtedly write to him in the near future to secure answers.

11.49 am

**Jon Trickett** (Hemsworth): Given what has been said so far in speeches and interventions, I think it possible that this will turn out to be two debates in one: a debate about motor vehicles, and a debate about other matters relating to clean fuels—"Clean Fuels" being, I believe, the title of the debate.

I want to speak about what may well be the minority interest in the House today—fuels used to generate power. No doubt the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions is an excellent Transport Minister, and he is obviously an excellent Front-Bench colleague, but I feel that he is a poor substitute for the Minister for Industry and Energy. I would have liked to hear a response or perhaps an opening speech from him, but no doubt my comments and those of others will be passed on to him in due course.

As has been said, the Government have launched an energy review, the second that they have conducted. The first resulted in a White Paper, published in 1998. Preparing for the debate, I glanced at it to remind myself of its contents. I felt that its opening betrayed a lack of self-confidence in asking on what basis the Government should intervene in the energy market, a question to which it came up with a number of responses.

I do not think that such a lack of self-confidence would have featured if the White Paper had been written in the present circumstances. The situation has clearly changed since 11 September; it also changed when the power blackouts occurred in California. I shall say more about that shortly, but it seems to me self-evident—as might be expected, given that I originate from a Yorkshire coalfield—that the Government should intervene directly and proactively in the energy market. Indeed, I see a case for public ownership, which may make me old-fashioned. It certainly makes me a socialist, and proud to be so.

As the world's economies have advanced and become almost post-industrial, they have become increasingly interdependent. Energy is now one of the fundamental commodities—so fundamental that it is impossible to imagine civilised life being conducted for more than a few moments without the national grid. We saw what happened during the blackouts in California.

That is my first reason for thinking that the Government should intervene in the energy market. There is also the issue of security of supply. Following the events of 11 September, we should reflect again on the potential impact of a terrorist strike against nuclear plants. I shall say more about that shortly.

Finally—and perhaps the debate should centre on this—there is the question of the environment and the Kyoto protocols. As we know, the production of energy generally is a great pollutant, and those who cause pollution cannot restrict its effects to themselves: pollution travels around the planet. Forests in one country can be destroyed by pollution created elsewhere, and we know that the United Kingdom has contributed to the destruction and defoliation of trees and plants in other parts of the world.

For all those reasons, I feel that the Government should intervene actively in the energy market. We should bear in mind the inheritance that Labour received in 1997: a mixed economy in regard to fuel, but one that was disastrously and dangerously skewed from the point of view of the national interest. Three primary fuel sources constituted part of that inheritance from the Tories, the first being the nuclear industry.

We know from the Secretary of State's response yesterday to an oral question—it has already been mentioned this morning—that the nuclear legacy now faced by the country is terrifying. The Secretary of State estimated that dealing with nuclear waste would cost us £85 billion. When asked who would bear the cost, she said that the British economy would pay the price of dealing with waste already known to exist or currently being created. That means that every man, woman and child in the country, and for generations to come, must deal not just with the polluting effects but with the economic and fiscal effects of nuclear waste.

When asked whether the current energy review should bear in mind the wider costs of dealing with nuclear waste, the Secretary of State clearly said that it should. It is patently true that every kilowatt hour of energy produced by nuclear plants should bear the costs not just of fuel and construction, but of dismantling and attempting to deal with the potentially lethal legacy of those plants.

What happened on 11 September has also placed another large question mark over the use of nuclear fuel for power generation. It takes no imagination to consider the devastating impact that a direct strike against a nuclear plant anywhere in the country would have, not just on the local population but on the nation as a whole and, indeed, throughout Europe. We do not need imagination, because we have seen what happened on Three Mile Island and at Chernobyl. Those were disasters, but I venture to suggest that they would be overshadowed by a direct strike against a nuclear plant.

**Mr. Francois:** I commend the hon. Gentleman for his honesty in describing himself as a socialist. It is nice to hear such honesty from the Labour Benches.

We are all rightly concerned about these matters, but is it not the case that all modern nuclear reactors, certainly in the United Kingdom, are able to withstand a direct strike by an aircraft? Is that not one of their critical design criteria?

**Jon Trickett:** Some consideration has certainly been given to security aspects, but I am postulating a direct hit not necessarily by an aeroplane but, perhaps, by some percussive instrument. In any event, I am never entirely convinced by structural engineers' calculations. Regardless of whether a plant could withstand a direct impact with a small plane, perhaps single-pilot and single-engine, the calculations I have seen suggest that large jets with a full payload of fuel could devastate a nuclear plant. I feel that the least we can expect is the rapid conducting of a major review of all those aspects.

**Mr. Francois** *rose—*

**Jon Trickett:** I am still dealing with the hon. Gentleman's first point.

I understand that elsewhere, on the European mainland, artillery weapons and even surface-to-air missiles are being constructed in an attempt to defend existing nuclear plants from potential terrorist attacks. That does not inspire confidence in me that Governments who have far more knowledge than the hon. Gentleman or me are confident that current construction techniques result in plants that can withstand terrorist attack.

Having covered the nuclear power aspects of the fuel inheritance received by the Labour Government, I turn to the subject of gas. The Conservatives constructed an energy pool that was severely biased in favour of gas as a source for power generation. Natural gas is a clean fuel, but indigenous sources are limited. Estimates of how long that gas would endure were hopelessly optimistic: in 1990, it was estimated that known gas reserves would last us for 36 years, but less than 10 years later that estimate had more than halved. Indigenous sources of natural gas will expire in about 14 years.

When that happens, we will face the likelihood of importing gas from the middle east and the former Soviet Union. Half of the world's known reserves of natural gas are owned by just two companies—Russia's Gazprom and National Iranian Gas Company. If we continue to promote the use of gas, supplies of gas to the British economy will be in the hands of a duopoly. That troubles me, first because duopolies tend to exploit their position by forcing up prices, and secondly because the location of those gas resources—geologically and, more important, politically—means that there is a danger that they could be destroyed by either geological or political events. In addition, after the events of 11 September, it is not implausible that a gas pipeline thousands of kilometres long leading to the United Kingdom might enter the mind of terrorists as a possible target for attack. For those reasons, we should closely examine our gas supplies.

Earlier, I mentioned three fuel sources, but I should have said four. The Conservatives did little to promote renewables, so I am glad that the Labour Government are accelerating research and development into those sources, albeit not as quickly as I would like. Given the difficulties of nuclear and gas energy sources, the Government should be accelerating the development of renewables as much as possible. That should form a major part of the energy review.

The final fuel source is coal. The coal industry in this country was deliberately destroyed for political reasons by the Conservatives—the history is well known and I shall not dwell on it now. Coal currently provides one third of the fuel for energy generation. It is not a clean fuel, so something has to be done if we intend to use it as an energy resource. Other than renewables, coal is the only indigenous fuel source of which we have long-term reserves.

Our coal-fired power stations are becoming rather long in the tooth; investment is needed. It is possible to halve the emissions produced by such power stations, and that is something that the Government should do immediately. The Government are funding a foresight programme to investigate the use of clean-coal technology: the programme advocates rapid investment in coal-fired plant to reduce emissions. That is welcome and should be regarded as an imperative. Coal is the only fuel of which we have a large indigenous supply. In addition, UK-produced coal is the cheapest in Europe, and it offers long-term security and diversity of supply.

There is a large world market for the sort of technology that we might use to make our coal-fired energy plants more efficient, and new technologies, some of which have been tested and proved, would allow us to burn coal still more efficiently. Coal liquefaction is not yet tried and tested, but it offers great hope for the future, so more research should be carried out. Gasification of coal has been tried and tested; we should utilise it as a matter of urgency and so ensure that we have a secure and diverse long-term energy industry.

A by-product of coal gasification is carbon dioxide—a pollutant that must be removed to create clean fuels. However, carbon dioxide is needed to pump into North sea oilfields to extract oil, so the carbon dioxide extracted during the process of coal gasification could be recycled to extract oil from North sea reserves. That is an interesting development which the Government should consider during their overall energy review, especially as

*[Jon Trickett]*

the Treasury would benefit from a windfall of approximately £300 million, which could be used to further research into renewables.

I hope that we can look forward to an early outcome of the energy review. We should finally nail down the nuclear option and begin its removal and the transfer to renewables. In the meantime, we should promote security and diversity of supply, which will direct us toward indigenous supplies such as Yorkshire coal and the use of new technologies.

12.7 pm

**Mr. Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire): Having been a Member of Parliament representing another constituency for almost 15 years and having had the honour during that time to serve as Government Deputy Chief Whip and Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, I can hardly claim that this is a maiden speech. To do so would be like the pop singer Madonna turning up to her next wedding claiming to be a virgin. None the less, I shall observe some of the conventions of a maiden speech.

My constituency, formerly the constituency of Bridlington, has a long history of being well served by hard-working Members of Parliament. My predecessor in East Yorkshire discharged his constituency duties with diligence, energy and enthusiasm, and I hope to follow his example. I wish him and his wife Jennifer a long and happy retirement.

East Yorkshire contains some of the most beautiful countryside in England. It is an honour to represent the seat. To any of my hon. Friends who are considering an end-of-season holiday, I strongly recommend a visit to my constituency. It has everything to offer, from the traditional seaside holiday at Bridlington and Skipsea, to the beautiful scenery of Flamborough Head. Travelling west, the tourist will find the interesting historic market towns of Market Weighton, Driffield and Pocklington—

**Mr. Mark Field** (Cities of London and Westminster): Good beer there.

**Mr. Knight:** Indeed there is. On that note, I should be happy to treat any of Member of Parliament, Conservative or Labour—or you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—to a round of drinks. If you, sir, visit East Yorkshire, we could go to Jerome's and have a drink while overlooking the beach and Bridlington bay.

The subject of the debate today is rather like motherhood and apple pie; it is difficult to be against it. How could any hon. Member oppose the trend towards the introduction of clean fuels? I welcome the development of clean fuels and the progress that is being made in this area.

I remind the House that not all vehicles can use the new, cleaner fuels. The Government have accepted that because, so far, they have behaved responsibly in allowing the continued but limited sale of four star leaded fuel. Modern everyday cars do not need to use that fuel but it is necessary for most vintage and classic cars. It is here that I ought to declare an interest, although perhaps that word is inadequate. I should say that I declare a passion for restoring, maintaining, owning and driving historic and classic motor vehicles. These vehicles are part of our national heritage and bring pleasure to tens of thousands of owners. They also bring pleasure to many members of the public, judging by the numbers who attend classic car events. Many of these events are held in support of charitable organisations.

I hope that the Minister can assure the House that it is no part of his longer-term strategy to force these cars off our roads by the introduction of a complete ban on the sale of leaded fuel. Some vintage cars do not need to use four star fuel. It is perhaps a testimony to the build quality of Rolls-Royce vehicles that every single Rolls-Royce car ever made can run on unleaded fuel without sustaining engine damage. Other classic vehicles are not so fortunate and many valuable and cherished vintage cars need to use leaded four star to be kept on the road. The overall output of vehicle emissions from classic vehicles is negligible. The Government have rightly recognised that, and I hope that the Minister will continue to allow the sale of leaded four star fuel at specialist outlets.

I wish to refer to the use of gas as a fuel for vehicles. I agree with earlier comments that the take-up of such vehicles in the UK to date has been disappointing. When John Major was Prime Minister, I was one of the first members of his Government to use a car capable of running on gas. There is a loss of power in a car running on gas as opposed to petrol, but this loss is so small that, under normal driving conditions, one cannot notice the difference. When driving on a motorway, one certainly cannot notice the difference in performance.

I believe that gas is an ideal fuel for fleet users and users in the public sector. How many Government cars—I include cars used by civil servants—have been converted to use gas? What is this number as a percentage of the total? If it is not 100 per cent., why not? Surely the Government should be leading by example. If the fleet is not 100 per cent. converted, will the Minister tell us when he expects it to be so?

The Government face a dilemma, which has been picked up by a number of my hon. Friends. The Government say that they want the wider use of gas and other clean fuels. However, if enough motorists were to make the change to these fuels, revenue from fuel taxes would plummet. A number of business men to whom I have talked have said that they do not think it is worth changing to gas. They believe that once the volume of gas-powered vehicles on our roads increases, the Government will increase tax on gas. They feel that there would not be sufficient time to claw back the extra investment before fuel duties were increased. The Government may have to revisit their commitment not to interfere with the tax on gas until 2004. If they want to accelerate the changeover to gas-powered vehicles, particularly among fleet users, they may find that that commitment has to be extended into the future.

One of the main problems at present is the availability, or non-availability, of gas, a point touched on by the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Jon Trickett). No motorist will travel miles out of his or her way to purchase a fuel that, in the long run, is only marginally cheaper to use.

**Mr. Jamieson:** Would the hon. Gentleman be prepared to give a commitment on behalf of his party on taxation on fuel beyond 2004?

**Mr. Knight:** Any commitment that my party might give must be given from the Front Bench. I would be extremely unwise, given the position from which I speak, to give a commitment on behalf of our new leader and his team. My Front-Bench colleagues have heard the Minister's remarks and will no doubt respond in due course.

One of the problems concerning the availability of gas has been the local authorities' planning permission role. Petrol tanks at filling stations are underground, but those filling stations that wish to start selling gas must apply for planning permission to have a tank on display above ground. A number of local authorities have refused permission for that to be done. I hope that the Minister will encourage local authorities to be sympathetic when they receive planning applications from garages that wish to stock this new, cleaner fuel.

Attempts to lower pollution should be part of a broad strategy—not an attack on the motorist per se—and should not be confined merely to encouraging the motorist to use cleaner fuels. The type of fuel used is important but it is only one aspect, and other measures should be considered. For example, if we manage to increase the number of motorists using cleaner fuel but congestion still increases at an alarming rate, reducing pollution per engine revolution will be meaningless if it is outweighed by longer engine running times. The Government, along with their crusade to encourage cleaner fuel use, should look at reducing congestion. This does not always have to be anti-motorist, and I hope that the Minister will be prepared to have an open mind in this area.

The nearest I get to road rage is when I am travelling in a non-rush hour period and, along with others, I am forced to sit at traffic lights that go to red in the direction I am facing to allow absolutely no traffic to come across the junction. For years, we have had traffic lights that work on a road sensor, so they can sense when traffic is waiting and give priority to traffic moving in that direction. In the year 2001, why do we still have traffic lights that work on a time basis? Many of these lights are in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mr. Field), and I encounter them when I leave this House late in the evening.

In America, there is an interesting system that has not led to an increase in road accidents. In non-rush hour periods, traffic lights are switched off from their normal use and all the lights at that junction will flash amber. The message to motorists is that they are approaching a road junction and should cross it with care. However, there is no mandatory instruction from the lights for motorists to stop; they approach with caution, the lights flash amber, and they can proceed on their journey if nothing is coming the other way.

**Lembit Öpik** (Montgomeryshire): That is an interesting point. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in Germany there was an experiment whereby people travelling at the legal speed limit in the ring road system could go through something called the green wave, which prevented them from being endlessly encouraged to speed up to get through the next set of lights or being punished for keeping to the speed limit?

**Mr. Knight:** I was aware of that and am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. It is something else that we should consider introducing in the country. The Minister looks puzzled. Basically, if motorists do not exceed the speed limit and if there is a series of traffic lights on a particular stretch of road, they find that they can get through all of them on green. If they exceed the speed limit, that is sensed by the traffic lights, which turn to red, so there is a non-financial punishment for breaking the speed limit, as people get stopped at traffic light after traffic light.

Insufficient research has been done into the level of pollution caused by traffic-calming measures—

**Lembit Öpik:** I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman again. The Minister seems to be showing an interest in this, so could I add one more thing? The other element of the green wave is that the timing of the lights and the distance between them is such that, if people drive at, say, 50 kph the lights will go green all the way around. It is simple to arrange that and it is extremely popular with motorists; by keeping to the speed limit, they reach their destination faster.

**Mr. Knight:** The hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Lembit Öpik) makes a good point. The Minister is nodding, so I hope that he will look at these matters which, I trust, he finds helpful in the quest to reduce congestion on our roads.

We must also look at the pollution caused by so-called traffic-calming measures. Several local authorities are gung-ho about the introduction of speed humps. Insufficient consideration has been given to the increased pollution caused by motor vehicles having to brake, negotiate a hump before invariably gathering speed before the next hump and braking again. That process is noisy, as car suspension units rattle over the humps, and more fuel is consumed. In many cases in which road humps have been introduced, local residents who, before the introduction of humps were in favour of them, wish that they had never supported the scheme; they are kept awake at night and their lives are made a misery. We must look at the guidelines under which local authorities operate before they are allowed to put speed humps on our roads. Most humps are ineffective anyway against one culprit, the motorcyclist, because they usually have gaps in the middle allowing motorcyclists to roar through unimpeded without having to slow down.

The other issue that I wish to raise en passant is the M1 motorway. When my party was in power, we constructed an offside lane hard shoulder on the northbound carriageway of the M1, just south of the intersection with the M25. After it was constructed, members of the local constabulary refused to police that stretch of carriageway as they felt that motorists would use it as an overtaking lane. We therefore authorised the gravelling over and kerbing of that hard shoulder. The Minister should consider bringing it back into use as an extra traffic lane at the busiest point of the M1, where it runs across the M25. That lane would be available if the gravel and kerbing were removed, and could be used as an extra lane to facilitate traffic movement during the rush hour. I hope that the Minister will look at that.

We should all welcome the move towards cleaner fuels, but we must remember that pollution, not the motor vehicle itself, is the problem that we should be addressing. As we look ahead, we should strive for cleaner fuels that are readily available across the United Kingdom and are

*[Mr. Knight]*

affordable. If we can do those things, we can help to protect the environment without penalising those who need to use the motor car.

12.25 pm

**Jane Griffiths** (Reading, East): It would be preferable to live in a country where public transport was so efficient and affordable that the goal that, I believe, we all share, of overall reduction in road traffic would appear credible. We do not live in such a country at the moment, but I believe that we will. Perhaps one day, the market, consumer preference and benevolent Government policies will lead to less traffic on our roads. However, it must be admitted that a significant reduction in road traffic is some way off, which makes addressing the pollution that we suffer all the more urgent.

I represent the constituency of Reading, East in the Thames valley. Every summer, a toxic pall of pollution hangs over us, and hospital admissions for asthma rocket. In that context, the game becomes one of minimising the negative effects of traffic, which is where cleaner fuels come in. My preferred mode of transport is the cleanest available; it is the bicycle, from which there is no pollution at all. I find it the best way to get around, but I know that it is not possible for everyone to manage that. I am interested in the passion of the right hon. Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight) for classic cars. I have never seen their attraction myself, but I know that a great many people do.

Fuels already exist that dramatically cut noxious emissions and noise. Successive Governments have added incrementally to the incentives to create a real, self-sustaining market for such fuels. From time to time, the Treasury has been tentative in constructing such incentives, but those for road fuel gases have been building up since the mid-1990s. Only recently have the Government finally seen the beginnings of a self-sustaining market in one of those fuels—liquefied petroleum gas. The cost has been not so much deadweight expenditure as dead time in getting the overall regime right. That cost can be measured in human mortality, diminished quality of life and environmental damage.

I am not going to go into great detail about the widespread benefits of LPG emissions over petrol and diesel, which are well known to hon. Members. However, I shall mention more recent scientific analyses that further underscore the benefit of greener fuel. Recent research has shown that car users, far from being insulated from the emissions that they inflict on pedestrians and cyclists, are in fact exposed to levels of volatile organic compounds, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide that are between three and six times greater than those at urban background locations. We often see cyclists wearing masks to help protect them from pollution, but perhaps drivers should wear masks. It is very much in the interests of drivers, particularly those whose occupations involve driving, to get their act cleaned up.

We know that the health gains from reducing particulate levels are greater than those of reducing any other pollutant. Recent evidence suggests that there may not be a safe threshold for the health effects of particulates at all. Evidence is strengthening that the larger particles—PM10s—may not be the measurement most representative of that part of the total particle mixture responsible for harmful effects on health. The toxicity may lie in a finer fraction of particles, PM25s. Road transport is the largest single source of national emissions of PM25s. Recent tests have shown that LPG emits approximately 99 per cent. fewer ultra-fine particles than ultra-low sulphur diesel.

I met my hon. Friend the Minister during the summer to address some of those matters, and inter alia, we discussed my belief that the London Mayor risked damaging or reducing the air quality benefits resulting from congestion charging by refusing to discount the great majority of LPG vehicles. I take the point about the difficulty of monitoring and assessing whether a vehicle is running on LPG. I am a great supporter of congestion charging and I live in hope that my local authority, Reading borough council, will introduce it one day. So far, it seems disinclined to do so.

My hon. Friend the Minister may ask why we should continue to give incentives for LPG use when it appears to be on the brink of a self-sustaining market and other, even cleaner technologies may be out there that need more help. I would argue that LPG technology is here, it works and it is practical. Some 4 million vehicles run on it worldwide and it powers some 50,000 vehicles in the UK, although that is not enough.

Consideration has been given to increasing support for CNG—compressed natural gas—which has a similar emissions profile to that of LPG, but there are only about 500 natural gas vehicles in the UK and not enough refuelling points. However, the number of refuelling points is increasing, as hon. Members have already pointed out. The problem with CNG relates to the "C"—compressing the gas means that the fuel tanks have to be heavy, and the refuelling infrastructure is much more costly and takes up more land space. Back in the early 1990s, my local bus company, Reading Buses, was a pioneer of using biofuels for its fleet of buses, and I invite my hon. Friend to visit Reading to see some of the initiatives that the company has taken.

Everyone has been talking about hydrogen lately, and my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Joan Ruddock) mentioned hydrogen fuel cells. It would be wonderful if the great dream of hydrogen cars could become a practical reality. However, there is a grand total of one taxi propelled by a fuel cell in the UK and there is no commercially available production of vehicles powered by hydrogen. The prospect of developing commercial production of vehicles powered by hydrogen is said to be promising in the not too distant future. In 1874, Jules Verne predicted the derivation of energy from water via hydrogen and 100 years later, in March 1974, "Road and Track" magazine predicted a future for hydrogen-powered cars. The phrase "hydrogen economy" was coined by General Motors four decades ago. Some 40 years on, the managing director of Toyota, Hiroyuki Watanabe, said on 10 April this year that fuel cells are

"making progress, but still unlikely in any numbers before 2020".

So there may be still two decades to go before the promise of 1874 can be realised. Far be it from me to be labelled a cynical politician—I am sure that the House contains no such creature—but could it be that hollow promises of the cleaner fuel to come in the near future are being used to buy more time for powerful interests behind conventional fuels? I hope not.

So, let us continue to invest in success.

**Joan Ruddock:** I wish to emphasise that people who believe—as I do—that the hydrogen fuel cell is the future accept that a transitional period will be needed, during which time products such as LPG will have their place.

**Jane Griffiths:** My hon. Friend makes an important point and I hope that the House will return to that issue in the not too distant future. We must not repeat the mistake that was made by a previous Government of giving incentives for a shift to LPG only suddenly to remove them and kill off what could have been a self-sustaining market for that green fuel two decades ago. The Energy Savings Trust made the point on its website:

"Research also considered the importance of a number of market factors in influencing decisions to switch to clean fuels . . . The strongest concern was a lack of confidence in the Government maintaining the fuel duty differential".

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give the market and fleet buyers the continuing confidence they need.

12.34 pm

**Mr. Robert Syms** (Poole): I declare an interest as a director of a family business involved in property building and road haulage. By definition, it might be assumed that as someone with an interest in road haulage I would have no interest in clean fuels, but I may wish to touch on the vexed issue of congestion charging and so I make that declaration. Due to a lack of foresight, I have no excuse for leaving the House before the end of the debate and so I look forward to the Minister's reply.

I am fortunate to represent the constituency of Poole which, apart from being a beautiful place, sits on top of the Wyche Farm oilfield, which is the biggest onshore oilfield in this country. It produces gas that could be used for LPG production. As a nation, we produce a surplus of LPG and three quarters of it is exported. We should do far more to use our indigenous resources for our own benefit.

The hon. Member for Reading, East (Jane Griffiths) mentioned that 4 million vehicles worldwide used LPG, but the figure may be as high as 5 million vehicles in 30 countries. LPG is widely used all over the world. The most recent figures from the Library from 1999 showed that Italy had 1.4 million vehicles that used LPG; the Netherlands, 360,000; Australia, 500,000; north America, 400,000; and Argentina, 400,000. Even New Zealand had 25,000. At that point in 1999, the UK had some 9,000 vehicles that used LPG. The Minister said the other day that we now have 25,540 vehicles running on LPG or CNG, excluding Northern Ireland. We are making progress, but we have a long way to go, especially when the number of registered vehicles has reached 29,174,788. More needs to be done.

Why is progress slow? It is not because of price. LPG is taxed at 6p a litre compared with 45p for petrol. It is substantially cheaper and motorists can make massive savings. However, there are other considerations, such as mileage, the cost of conversion and the resale value of the vehicle. It is true that a stable financial regime is necessary. The Minister said, rightly, that people are conservative in their buying habits and can be suspicious of something that looks like a good deal, because if it becomes popular the Government will make it less of a good deal. That lies behind the discussion today of the Government's guarantee to keep the tax level until 2004. That is a good start. Together with the hon. Members for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Hamilton) and for Hereford (Mr. Keetch), I met Treasury officials to argue that the Government should publicise the financial benefits more widely and give longer guarantees so that people would have the confidence to make the change to LPG vehicles.

**Mr. Miller:** Given that the break-even time following conversion to LPG is about 18 months of typical usage, there is an incentive for someone buying a car today to buy an LPG vehicle. Even if the incentive lasts only until 2004, one would still be quids in.

**Mr. Syms:** Depending on the mileage done and several other factors, the hon. Gentleman is right.

The Energy Saving Trust and its PowerShift project has been a great enabler for people making the change, and the project has worked well. Some 12 to 18 months ago, there was a grants backlog because several fleets were applying for them. Because vehicles have to run on petrol and gas and because the grants were delayed, some fleets incurred higher costs than they would have done had they used diesel. That has now been sorted out, but money for conversion should be made available rapidly so that people are not penalised for choosing dual running.

Car manufacturers have also made some efforts. Vauxhall ran some advertisements and has ensured that much of its range is capable of dual running. Ford has also made a large commitment.

There is also an awareness of the health benefits among the general public. LPG spews out 98 per cent. less carbon monoxide, 81 per cent. fewer hydrocarbons, and 85 per cent. fewer nitrous oxides than petrol. Cars produce a great deal of pollution. Apart from benzene and carbon monoxide, they also produce PM10s and PM25s. We all need to do a lot more on this issue. There has been a great growth in asthma and other associated diseases, particularly in our cities. If the public were convinced of the benefits, they would go for the change for that reason alone.

My main conclusion as to why we have not done so well is that people are unaware of the benefits. The Government ought to get some of the oil companies to give a lot more publicity to the benefits of LPG and alternative fuels. What we are talking about today is one of the best kept secrets. If we try to tell people about the benefits of LPG, they tend not to believe us. They think, "If it is that good, why doesn't everybody use it?" Publicity has to be the key in this matter.

The repay period that has been mentioned is critical, as it depends on whether one can access a supply of the gas. If one cannot, one would find oneself running a car more often on petrol. There have been—and occasionally still are—planning problems. The Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Streatham (Keith Hill), issued some revised guidance to local authorities for PPG13, because some of them were having difficulty determining quickly the appropriate sites.

I am pleased that the oil companies have undertaken to put in more refuelling sites, but there are practical problems. Because the sites have to be above ground and because the petrol stations of certain oil companies are small, there can be size constraints. A number of sites will

*[Mr. Syms]*

be needed to supply the fuel, and the additional guidance has helped. However, this remains a matter of public education.

There is also the problem of approved installers. The Minister raised the question of how to differentiate between bona fide people who do excellent work and those who work under railway arches. Perhaps representatives of the industry ought to get together to devise some sort of qualification in the form of an NVQ or certificate to ensure that the work is done to the right standard. The cowboys who get this wrong can create very dangerous vehicles indeed. If the industry is to be respectable, the people who carry out such work under railway arches and who do not do it well have to be put out of business. The Minister and his civil servants must focus on that.

There is a lot of progress to be made. As oil companies put in more refuelling sites, and as more people buying cars see people they know using these vehicles, there will be a great advantage. So far, because of supply problems, the main uptake has been in the public sector—for example, in local councils. Wandsworth council was one of the first to use LPG in its vehicles. The advantage for such a local authority, with a defined area, is that it can have a refuelling pump in its depot. Many authorities that people would conclude are good authorities are doing this. A number of police authorities have also done it, and are finding that they can generate savings that can be used for other important matters.

The whole approach to this issue must be based on education about the cost savings, and about the fact that there are now more places to fill up. As that gets through to people, we shall start to catch up with some of those countries on the continent with more LPG users.

I want to touch on congestion charging. As vice-chairman of the Conservative party, I can make no commitments from the Front Bench on behalf of my party. However, if congestion charging is implemented for the reasons that the Government have given, it would not be unreasonable to regard vehicles running on alternative fuels as prime candidates for consideration for exemption. I know that the whole issue of exemption from congestion charging is a fraught and difficult one that will take up considerable time, but it would give the wrong signal if we penalise people using vehicles that are less polluting, more economical and better for people and for the country.

LPG needs to be encouraged. There needs to be more education on the subject. If that were done, more people would take it up and we and our families and constituents would all benefit.

12.45 pm

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I want briefly to cover a number of issues. The perception of my constituents, as I mentioned in an earlier intervention, is that air quality is the most important matter affecting them, because of the nature of the constituency. I want to cover the role of certain companies, past and present, the role that the green movement plays in the debate, the need for monitoring and issues relating to future vehicles.

First, I should like to comment on some of the important points raised in all sincerity by hon. Members in all parts of the House. I listened with a certain amount of amusement to the introductory remarks from the hon. Member for North-East Cambridgeshire (Mr. Moss) about ultra-low sulphur petrol, and to his demands as to why the tax cut had not been introduced earlier. Only six months ago, the Opposition were screaming and shouting that that measure was all a con by the Chancellor because there was no such thing as ultra-low sulphur petrol available.

The hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Syms) made the point about oil companies and publicity; he is absolutely right. I have done some work with Shell and with Vauxhall that has resulted in the development of an LPG plant at a motorway service station right outside the Shell refinery, which has proved very successful. There is an important job of work to be done on that issue.

I shall comment briefly on the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Joan Ruddock). I accept that she makes her comments about nuclear power in all sincerity. However, she misses the point in terms of the pure mathematics of the issue. The notion that we have to close down all nuclear power stations as a result of 11 September is, frankly, untenable, in terms of the politics—we cannot give way to terrorism—and of energy demand. The world demand for power is increasing at a considerable rate. If we consider the economic growth of China, for example—a country with infinite reserves of brown coal—and convert it to energy usage over the next five to 10 years, any benefits from the Kyoto agreement could be wiped out by that one country alone. Therefore simply to say that one important part of the fuel equation can be written off straight away is, frankly, unrealistic. We have to spend a lot more time, effort and money researching the issues of long-term storage as a solution to that issue.

**Lembit Öpik:** Would the hon. Gentleman nevertheless accept that one cannot pretend that nuclear fission is a clean source of power, although nuclear fusion could conceivably be a relatively clean source of power, assuming that we did the research into making it economically and physically viable?

**Mr. Miller:** It is possible that huge benefits will accrue from research, some of which would cost millions and millions of pounds to carry out, but I concede that there is no such thing as a clean fuel in the purest sense. Even the bicycle of my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Jane Griffiths) consumed a high amount of energy in its manufacture because of the energy implications of manufacturing aluminium. In debating energy, we must think about the whole life cycle of products.

In my constituency, where vehicles, fuels and fuel additives are manufactured, those are hot issues. One finds oneself regularly being attacked by Friends of the Earth, particularly in respect of Associated Octel, which is still the principal supplier to the world of tetraethyl lead, the antiknock compound for leaded petrol. It will continue to be a massive export earner for the UK over the next five to 10 years, until that product is phased out throughout the world. Friends of the Earth make the terrible mistake of assuming that emissions from that plant are all carcinogenic. One regularly sees the accusation that chloroethane, otherwise known as ethyl chloride, is carcinogenic.

I have spoken directly to the International Agency for Research on Cancer and I am assured that there is no evidence whatever of ethyl chloride being a human

carcinogen. Friends of the Earth chose to draw its conclusions from the Californian P65 list, which does not have the same authority. We must avoid causing fear among people when we are dealing with those issues. Major considerations have to be made rationally and responsibly. I call on the green movement to work with the scientific community and agree a rational basis for the descriptors.

I commend to hon. Members the website Homecheck, an interesting, innovative website leading, I guess, to the notion of electronic conveyancing. It provides a huge amount of useful information about various aspects of safety and the environment around particular properties. It can be looked at by postcode. This morning, I chose to look at three postcodes entirely at random: SW1A 0AA, which is well known to hon. Members; the postcode of my constituency office; and the postcode of the constituency office of the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson).

Some interesting comparisons are shown as bar graphs. The data are supplied by a reputable source—AEA Technology; I think that colleagues on both sides of the House accept that that is a reputable source. The interesting thing is that in a constituency such as mine where there is huge concern about air quality, the level of nitrogen dioxide is about the same as in my hon. Friend's constituency: at a low to medium part of the scale. In central London, it goes off the end of the scale; it is at a very high level.

London's air quality is very worrying. NOx, $SO_2$, benzene, butadiene, $CO_2$, PM10 and lead are all at extremely worrying levels, but NOx and SOx levels in my hon. Friend's constituency are ahead of those in my constituency. That illustrates the fact that the urban density of the centre of Plymouth is more of a polluter because of traffic and energy use than because of some of the manufacturing plants. There are other issues surrounding manufacturing plants that we must not run away from, but it is worth looking at those data carefully.

I turn now to those other issues. There are fears among people who live close to some of the manufacturing plants and indeed among people living in dense urban areas. It would be helpful if standards were set for the way in which monitoring equipment is placed and located, so that there are consistent measurements throughout the country. Indeed, monitoring should be as publicly available as it is possible to make it. There is no reason, given some of the technology in use not a stone's throw from here for measuring levels in Parliament square, why the data should not be up on a screen immediately. In the overall scale of things, it would cost peanuts to make those data publicly available instantly, so that people could make judgments about some of the risks around them.

Much has been said about the potential use of electricity, gas and fuel cells in future vehicles. With electric vehicles there is the argument about shifting pollution from the point of use to the point of generation. Nevertheless, electricity provides a useful short-term solution for some of the major urban pollution problems, and it is indeed pleasing to see that some of our delivery vehicles are now using electricity.

The use of LPG, too, is expanding. There have been some teething troubles, such as the chicken-and-egg argument about whether we should build fuelling stations when there are not enough cars to use them. Why not? Perhaps the incentives are not right—but the equation is coming right now. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, there is now a real growth in refuelling points.

In the very small village of Feock in Cornwall—or within a mile or two of it—I spotted an LPG station. If LPG is reaching such remote spots perhaps we are reaching the threshold necessary to justify more investment by manufacturers.

The hon. Member for Poole rightly praised the work that Vauxhall is doing. There is not the same pessimism at Vauxhall as there is at Toyota, although we are still some way away from production line numbers of fuel cell vehicles. Hon. Members who are interested in sports may have noticed that the vehicle that led the marathon race in the Sydney Olympics was a GM Zafira people carrier, powered entirely by a fuel cell. The technology is there; the question is how to translate it into an economically viable unit for production purposes.

That raises some important points for Governments, and for Oppositions. It is important for the vehicle industry that we look a long way into the future—and in the far, far distant future, there may be a time when the Opposition become a Government again. *[Interruption.]* It is a long way away.

We need to look a long way ahead because of the economics of the vehicle industry. We need to establish standards of safety and appropriate type approvals for the design of fuel cells very soon, so that companies can invest and work out the economics of manufacture on the basis of what particular Governments will allow on their roads. I hope that that will be done, not just at a UK level but at a pan-European level, because by and large the vehicles that we drive are pan-European. Indeed, some components made at Ellesmere Port go far further afield than Europe; we even export engines to the United States, which is a credit to the industry there.

We need to co-operate closely with the fuel industry. Companies are repositioning themselves. BP has done so, and Shell now describes itself not as a fuel company but as an energy company. The fuel industry recognises that a change is taking place, and Governments and Oppositions are doing the same. Technology is advancing. There is no reason why, working in partnership, we should not be able to address some of the serious figures to which I referred earlier in a reasonable period of time. I do not think that Toyota's pessimism is warranted, although it would be without appropriate Government incentives and a long-term vision with which the industry can work.

We are rapidly moving in the right direction. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to continue with his campaign. When he was a Back Bencher he worked extremely hard on the issue of gas-powered vehicles. I remember speaking with him about it in 1992 when we were first elected to the House. Progress is being made; the previous Administration started to put some of the pieces in place, which have helped, but the market is changing as technology changes. We must be prepared to take a responsible, long-term view and meet the needs of society so that people can have the benefits of personal transport without the disadvantages associated with the worst aspects of early designs of the internal combustion engine.

1.1 pm

**Mr. Mark Francois** (Rayleigh): As a newly appointed member of the Select Committee on Environmental Audit, I am grateful for this opportunity to take an interest in the environmentally related issue of clean fuels. For the record, I declare an interest as a small shareholder in Centrica plc.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight) on his second maiden speech in the House of Commons, as it were. He spoke very well and made a number of suggestions which I noticed other right hon. and hon. Members readily picked up on. The Minister also showed interest and I hope that he will actively follow up some of those points next week.

It is also a pleasure to see the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Lembit Öpik) on the Liberal Democrat Front Bench. He and I were together at university—although not in the biblical sense.

We all want a cleaner and greener environment. The debate centres around how best to achieve that, and a particular area surrounds vehicle emissions. What our vehicles pump out into our atmosphere affects all of us, whether motorists or not. To take just one example, some 75 per cent. of all carbon monoxide emissions in the United Kingdom come from petrol engines. However, we will not cut vehicle emissions by being anti-car and simply attempting to price motor vehicles off our roads by continually increasing the taxation on petrol. Many people rely on their cars to get to and from their place of work or to visit relatives. Punishing them for that reliance by imposing ever-higher petrol prices is a negative and regrettable approach. Moreover, we saw very clearly last year the reaction of the British people to ever-increasing fuel taxation. They will not put up with it any more, so we need to find other incentives instead.

We need a much more positive approach to persuade people to use more environmentally friendly fuels, not because they feel they have no choice, but because they want to. In short, we need to use an environmental carrot rather than a fiscal stick. A good example is liquefied petroleum gas, usually referred to as LPG. It can be stored under pressure as a liquid and then used to power motor vehicles. Most vehicles can be adapted to run on dual fuel, either LPG or petrol, with a changeover being made by the simple flick of a switch on the dashboard. This alternative fuel is purchased just like petrol, by simply filling up at the designated pumps.

LPG has a number of important environmental advantages, even over ultra-low sulphur, or ULS, petrol. It produces between 30 to 35 per cent. less carbon monoxide and 20 to 40 per cent. fewer hydrocarbons. It generates up to 80 per cent. less nitrogen oxide than ULS petrol and up to 90 per cent. less than ULS diesel. LPG also produces up to 90 per cent. fewer emissions of particulates than ULS diesel.

LPG also tends to be much cheaper than petrol. The price per litre, at around 40p, is roughly half that of petrol. The duty on the fuel is also appreciably lower than the duty on either petrol or diesel. In the Budget of March 2001, LPG duty was reduced by 3p a litre, and was effectively frozen in real terms until 2004, although legitimate concerns have been raised today about whether that commitment will continue thereafter.

On a mile-per-mile basis, most vehicles would save at least a third of their fuel costs by switching over from petrol. One obstacle to using LPG in the past has been the cost of vehicle conversion, which averages about £1,500 for a family car. However, that is changing, too. Many vehicle manufacturers are now providing new LPG-powered versions of their more popular models from the outset. In addition, the PowerShift initiative, which is encouraged by the Government via the Energy Saving Trust, is seeking to create a sustainable market in the United Kingdom for vehicles run on clean fuels. PowerShift grants can cover more than half the cost of converting vehicles under five years old. That targeted initiative should help to produce a useful increase in the 50,000 or so LPG-capable vehicles currently in the United Kingdom. If LPG continues to catch on, we may in time reach the current Dutch number of about 400,000 vehicles, or even the Italian figure of well in excess of 1 million.

**Mr. Greg Knight:** One of the dangers has been raised by the Minister. Motorists may take their car for conversion to a back-street so-called specialist, who may not do the job properly. Is there not another problem? If conversion of a car to run on LPG was not done properly and the person is involved in an accident, he may well find that the insurance company uses that as a reason for not honouring any claim. Is not the answer the introduction of a certification process whereby, once a vehicle is converted, the owner obtains a safety certificate, which can then be produced to the insurance company, and possibly to the licensing authority when the vehicle is retaxed? That would get round the problem.

**Mr. Francois:** My right hon. Friend makes a potentially valuable point. It is always a good rule in life to read the small print of any insurance contract. I also thank my right hon. Friend; it is the first time since I was elected that anyone has intervened in a speech of mine, so I am grateful to have got that out of the way in such a gentle manner.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst):** Order. I should point out to the hon. Gentleman that the matter is entirely under his own control.

**Mr. Francois:** I thank you for your kind advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our wish to move towards higher numbers of LPG-powered vehicles in the United Kingdom—it is obvious that we have some catching up to do—could represent another example of the Conservative party being ready to learn from the positive experience of our European partners.

Another drawback to converting to LPG has been the relatively small number of filling stations equipped with dedicated refuelling pumps. Understandably, people felt deterred from relying on LPG because they were anxious about finding sufficient outlets to purchase it from, even though most LPG cars also have a petrol system. However, a number of fuel companies are making LPG pumps available on their forecourts to remedy the deficiency. At the beginning of this month, some 900 service stations across the United Kingdom were so equipped, and that is increasing at a rate of almost one a day.

Moreover, that is no longer such a problem for my constituents because TotalFinaElf, supported by British Gas, has just opened a new, dedicated LPG pump at its

service station at Stock road, West Hanningfield, in my constituency. That new facility will assist my constituents, and those from surrounding areas who also wish to do so, to take advantage of the benefits of LPG without having to travel far to fill up. I am delighted that TotalFinaElf is providing a cleaner road fuel in my constituency. Anything that sensibly contributes to improving air quality in Essex or the rest of the country is to be welcomed, and the company's action will certainly do so.

**Lembit Öpik:** May I say what a pleasure it is to debate against the hon. Gentleman, after 14 years of absence from Bristol university, but that it is a shame that he chose to sit so far across the Opposition Benches? He will be delighted to learn that, in Montgomeryshire, Steve Hughes's garage has led the way, but it has been difficult to get other rural garages to understand the economic benefits taking such action. Does he agree that perhaps one of our challenges is to sell the economic viability to rural outlets as well as to car users?

**Mr. Francois:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I should not wish to interfere with any press release that he may have drafted, but I have heard what he has said.

In conclusion, we need to reduce vehicle emissions on our roads, but we shall not achieve that aim by imposing punitive taxation on petrol. We must provide positive reasons for people to switch, over time, to more environmentally friendly fuels such as LPG. LPG is cleaner and cheaper than petrol. As the Minister has said, it is also safer. Moreover, it is now available at Stock road in my constituency, and I commend it to the House.

1.11 pm

**Mr. Mark Field** (Cities of London and Westminster): I shall open up the debate slightly to one or two general issues, as well as touching on issues that affect my own constituency in central London. So I should like to thank the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Joan Ruddock) for broadening the debate earlier. I must confess that I disagree with virtually every word she said, especially in relation to nuclear energy, but she made a useful contribution none the less.

The Minister played very much a straight bat during a solid half-hour innings. I suspect that that puts him in the somewhat unusual position of being a safe pair of hands in the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. There are not many of those around at the moment. I shall have to wait to hear what he has to say about my contribution in a few moments.

My hon. Friend the Member for North-East Cambridgeshire (Mr. Moss), who opened for the Opposition, used the words that were part and parcel of the Labour manifesto in 1997. The Labour party said that it would form "the greenest Government ever." One has to admire—dare I say?—the cynicism, or perhaps the hypocrisy, of the Prime Minister at the Rio conference a few months ago.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman must learn what is parliamentary language and what is not. I ask him to withdraw any such reference to the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Field:** I shall indeed, but I was making the point that, at the Rio conference, shortly after the 1997 election, the Prime Minister proudly said that the one thing that he could say about the last Conservative Administration was that they had managed to achieve their goals in reducing $CO_2$ emissions. Of course, what he did not say was that that was almost totally because of the rationalisation of the coal industry, which he and his party had opposed at every opportunity in the preceding years. I accept that several issues are at stake there, and I am only sorry that the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Jon Trickett) is not here because he mentioned that in his speech.

I suppose that throughout the political lives of many of the relatively younger Members—I hasten to add that I am not looking at the Minister in making that comment—environmental issues have been at the forefront. That goes back to the 1989 European elections, when the Green party suddenly came apparently from nowhere to gain 15 per cent. of the vote. Such issues have therefore become much more mainstream. I should like to think that parties on both sides of the House would agree that we are trying to move in the right direction.

**Lembit Öpik:** I suggest that the Greens' success in 1989 was a direct result of the tragedy at Chernobyl. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a bit of a shame that our environmental concerns seem to be ratcheted up only by international environmental disasters?

**Mr. Field:** I accept that in part. Clearly, there are many psephological reasons behind the results of the 1989 European elections, and I am sure that MORI and others have their own theories, but there is something in what the hon. Gentleman says.

There is a concern that Government intervention will be the knee-jerk reaction to these concerns. The hon. Member for Reading, East (Jane Griffiths), who is no longer present, referred to cynicism among politicians. It is certainly true that many, particularly on the Conservative Benches, have a somewhat sceptical attitude to environmental matters. I am old enough to remember that in the mid-1970s, when people were talking about world climate change problems, the concern was not that there was global warming, but that we were heading towards a new ice age. At that time, it was also said that fossil fuels would be running out by the late 1990s. There is a great danger that by spreading horror stories, perhaps for the right motives, and by crying wolf so often, many Green movements undermine their own case in the long term. We need a reasoned debate, and that does not necessarily mean that Government intervention in the first instance is the right response.

Many politicians have jumped on the environmental bandwagon with little, or unreliable, scientific evidence. I am increasingly concerned by the alarmist views that are all too often expressed in the environmental debate by unscrupulous lobbyists and scientists. However, I accept overall that there has been a favourable cultural shift in this debate.

I turn now to some of the issues that affect central London. The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) spoke about the SW1A 0AA area, which is of course in my constituency, where the figures for many environmental indicators are completely off the scale. The Minister talked about noise nuisance in urban hot spots, and made favourable points about night-time lorry movements. I would support any measures to reduce the

*[Mr. Field]*

appalling problems experienced by many central London residents. I am, however, a little alarmed by the prospect of too many pilot schemes and by the idea of relying on the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority to implement measures. The GLA seems to give little thought to any strategy for progress in environmental matters.

Many people who have lived in London for years will think of the seminal year for the environment as being not 1989 but 1956, when the Clean Air Act was passed. I was struck, when out canvassing, by older voters' memories of London before that time, when smog meant that thousands of people would die of flu and other bronchial illnesses every year. We need to consider environmental matters in the round because there have been great improvements. We must not be complacent, but we should focus on achieving change through the use of clean fuels and, as the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford pointed out, of solar and wind power.

The way in which recycling has taken off in London has been a revelation. I am not sure what the situation is outside the capital. I am proud to have spent the past seven and a half years as a member of the local authority in the neighbouring Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, which has a fantastic recycling record. That is also true of the City of Westminster council and of many Labour-run boroughs—I am not trying to make a political point. It is evident, when one walks in central London or the suburbs, that many people recycle newspapers and bottles. My only concern is that we may almost have reached saturation level. If one lives in a small flat in the middle of the city it can be difficult to recycle, unless one has umpteen bags hanging in one's kitchen all week. We should think about how we reach the next stage of encouraging personal recycling. Thankfully, the commercial environment already treats recycling as an increasingly important imperative.

Several hon. Members—in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Syms) and my right hon. Friend the Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight)—referred to congestion charging. I cannot take responsibility for what my right hon. Friend said about traffic-calming measures, but I accept that they have some negative environmental effects in their attempts to reduce speed in built-up areas. We must consider the consequences of such policies.

I am worried about proposals for congestion charging. Whatever happens in London will be the starting point for similar charges in other parts of the country. The specifics are unfavourable, not least because the Mayor of London was elected on a clear mandate to improve public transport. It is clear that London Underground, which I discussed with the Minister in Westminster Hall two days ago, will need long-term investment for a decade or so. We cannot put all that burden on the buses. If we introduce the congestion charge as soon as proposed, it will not have a positive effect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh (Mr. Francois) rightly said that we need a carrot-and-stick approach. We cannot put a massive burden on to car owners, but we could encourage them to behave better. A key way to do that would be to reconsider the taxing regime of the better fuels. Deep cuts are needed; 3p, 5p or 6p a litre is not enough. We need to encourage the next generation of car owners to act appropriately.

Some Government members have formulated an anti-car policy under the guise of an environmental smokescreen, although the Minister would probably not agree. I am worried about the number of exemptions from congestion charging. I take on board what my hon. Friend the Member for Poole said about that and am glad that he is not making the policy.

Although it is essential that we rely on individuals to take responsibility for their actions—one of my fundamental values—I am much encouraged by the cultural change in the approach to the environment. Many people think that it is important and that they must focus on it if they are to improve their lives and those of their children and grandchildren. The Government should make deep cuts in taxation and spend less time posturing on the allegedly high environmental standards that they have brought to bear.

1.23 pm

**Mr. Andrew Turner** (Isle of Wight): I am disappointed that we are not debating drugs. It is a discourtesy, not to us but to our constituents and those interest groups that have taken the trouble to brief us and ask us to attend a debate, that their plans and hopes can be dashed at short notice. I am sorry that the Home Office is too busy to discuss the important issue of drugs, especially when it has time to introduce Bills to permit sex discrimination that otherwise would be unlawful. However, that is not a criticism of the Minister.

I recognise the work that this Government and previous Governments have done on the fairly narrow interpretation of clean fuels. I am not as critical as the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake). Had he seen "Yes Minister" he would know that a consultation that is due to be completed by the end of the summer is unlikely to be completed before Christmas, and that spring in Government terms means any time before the summer recess.

I would like to extend the debate a little further than the issue of road fuels, which is the one that has taken up most of the debate. I wish to consider other clean fuels, for which the Isle of Wight is one of the centres. It is the home of world yachting, and yachts are driven by the cleanest fuel of all. The Americas Cup jubilee, which we celebrated earlier this year, was the 150th anniversary of the oldest international sporting fixture in the world, and it created the memorable sight of the J-class yachts that were built in the 1920s and 1930s. They are still seaworthy and are entirely driven by clean fuel.

I hope that the Government will recognise the role of yachting in the economy—particularly on the south coast of England and on the island—and consider adventurously whether increasing sail-assisted shipping would assist the non-urgent transmission of goods from one part of the world to another.

I hope that the Government will also recognise the work that is being done on GBR Challenge, the entry to the next Americas Cup, which is to take place in Wellington, New Zealand in 2003. GBR Challenge is being built and developed in yards in Cowes in my constituency, taking advantage of another important characteristic of the island—the fact that it is a centre for advanced plastics technology.

Two companies, in particular—SP System and Aerolaminates—are involved in the development of plastics for the sails on wind farms. The island is rapidly becoming a centre for Britain's wind technology.

**Lembit Öpik:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one way that the Government could show their genuine commitment to clean fuel and environmentalism is by supporting yachting and gliding which are celebrations of British sport at its best and clean in terms of their environmental impact?

**Mr. Syms:** As is hang gliding.

**Mr. Turner:** As is hang gliding, with which the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Lembit Öpik) has some acquaintance.

I was disappointed that the only Minister to attend the Americas Cup jubilee was the New Zealand Education Minister. Not only did no Minister from the Government attend, but it appeared that Ministers in the Foreign Office did not even know that the Minister from New Zealand was in the country at the time.

I hope that the Minister will consider appropriate measures to deal with the problems of visual and aural pollution caused by wind-farm technology. Offshore wind farming is acceptable even to the yachting community. It has a higher capital cost, but a much reduced running cost compared to onshore technology. That is because one needs three sails onshore to reduce aural pollution, but only two sails offshore. Offshore technology is much more efficient and has lower running costs. I hope that the Minister will say something about encouraging offshore wind farms in the future.

The island is also the Morris Minor capital of the world. I declare an interest as the owner of an MG that is neither classic nor vintage—it is just old. However, I was glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight) asked for an assurance from the Minister—I hope that it will be given—that there are no plans to drive old cars off the road. We owners are quite capable of doing that ourselves.

I also wish to mention an issue that the horticulture industry on the island has recently drawn to my attention. As I said in my maiden speech, the island is famed for its horticulture industry—we export garlic to France—but I now wish to refer particularly to the tomato industry in the Arreton valley. The joint directors of Wight Salads spoke to me recently about two problems. One is the granting of massive subsidies for greenhouse fuels in Spain, leading to unfair competition with businesses on the island that receive no such subsidies. I do not believe it can be environmentally efficient to encourage the use of more fuels in greenhouses.

Another problem is the collapse of a combined heat and power company that was in train to deliver combined heat and power—which, as the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Joan Ruddock) said, is considerably more environmentally sustainable than other sources of power. The tomato growers on the Isle of Wight, and indeed horticulturists elsewhere in the country, were relying on that company to deliver inexpensive and environmentally friendly fuel. The administrator—Railtrack is not the only organisation to need administration—is holding out for what they believe to be an unrealistic price for the company's assets.

Communications with Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry have so far established no way of putting the scheme back on track. I hope that Ministers will regard combined heat and power as meriting at least as much urgent consideration as Railtrack. It is important to maintain the determination of horticulturists and others to use environmentally friendly fuel.

I hope that the Government will consider a number of other minor issues. It is essential that we improve public transport if we are to reduce the number of trips made by car. It is all very well talking about friendly fuel—fewer trips by car obviously mean even less pollution—but we must have the improvements in public transport in place first. We cannot drive the motorist off the roads by using a stick; we must encourage him off the roads by providing effective public transport.

In the context of Railtrack, let me say that I hope the Minister will keep an eye on the Island Line, which is the most efficient and punctual railway in the country. There are problems with the track bed all along the line from Ryde Pier Head to Shanklin. There were commitments from Railtrack to keep the track bed in decent condition, and we do not want them to be lost.

I also hope that the Government will consider a reduction of building in the countryside. It is wholly inconsistent to call for house building all over the south-east, and then complain when people try to travel into London or other big cities by car to get to work. That is particularly true on the island, where there are plans for 8,000 new houses, half of them on greenfield sites.

It is not as though we have such an excess of jobs and such a demand for labour that we need people to come to the island to occupy those 8,000 new houses. In fact, we are one of the top 10 unemployment black spots in the south-east. Things are improving, but we do not need all those additional houses.

I welcome the Minister's commitment to considering a scheme for "green waves" of traffic lights, mentioned by the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire. When I travelled to Switzerland at the age of 10, 37 years ago, the system was already in place on the approach to Aachen. It seems to have taken us a very long time to learn from our European competitors, and I hope we can do something about it. I think particularly of the West Quay road in Southampton, where there are more traffic lights than there were at the time of the 1997 election. They seem to be staggered so that one reaches them all when they are red.

Aircraft fuels have not been mentioned yet, and I hope the Minister will mention them when he winds up. We need to do much more to reduce environmental pollution from aeroplanes, and aircraft fuels are one of the main sources of greenhouse gases. What plans have the Government to reduce the use of aeroplanes?

1.34 pm

**Mr. Jamieson:** With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will reply to the debate.

This has been an interesting debate. We have covered many important environmental issues relating to clean fuels and demonstrated our shared concern for the environment and the air that we breathe. We all recognise that the vehicles and fuels that we use can play an important role in environmental improvement. I shall try

*[Mr. Jamieson]*

to respond to as many of the points raised as I can, but such is the number of questions asked that I might not be able to answer them all.

I got the impression that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for North–East Cambridgeshire (Mr. Moss), who was unable to remain for the rest of the debate, had not listened to the discussion that had occurred before he spoke, because I had already referred in my opening speech to many of the issues that he raised. He said that he wanted a different debate—he wanted to debate Railtrack or some other transport matter. I wonder why the Opposition did not choose to debate one of those topics on Tuesday; instead, I believe that they have decided to talk about the personalities in the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. I am flattered that they want to discuss my merits as a Minister at that Department, but I too would have preferred a discussion about some other transport issue. However, the subjects of debate on Opposition days are a matter for the Opposition, not the Government. Today's debate was in the Government's gift. We chose the subject and the speeches today prove that it is a valuable debate to have.

The hon. Gentleman raised an important point relating to the threat of terrorist action. As a former Northern Ireland Minister, he will understand why we do not discuss such matters in full, but I can assure him and the House that all precautionary steps have been taken in respect of the subjects that he raised.

The hon. Gentleman asked about discussions with the motor industry on cleaner fuels, especially the take-up of LPG. Those discussions are taking place. I understood him to accuse us at one point of being tardy in giving tax incentives for ultra-low sulphur fuel, having waited until this year to do so. That point was taken up by my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller). I recall that just over a year ago we were criticised for proposing to give the incentive at a time when the fuel did not exist. I do not understand how one can give incentives for something that does not exist, but there we are—the fuel exists now, so perhaps we can expect guidance from the hon. Member for North-East Cambridgeshire.

The hon. Gentleman and others asked about vehicle excise duty reflecting more than carbon dioxide emissions. The difficulty facing us is the need to make sure that VED concessions are clearly related to something that people understand, so that they understand why the concessions have been given. That is why we have chosen to pursue that course—that and the fact that carbon dioxide is the main greenhouse gas.

The hon. Gentleman asked about bus pollution and correctly identified buses as a significant contributor to air pollution in some areas. He and the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mr. Field) will be pleased to learn that London now has 800 more buses with particulate traps, which will contribute to reductions in PM10s.

The hon. Member for North-East Cambridgeshire suggested that the Government were anti-car. What is better for the motorist than reducing congestion? It is pro-car and pro-motorist of us to work to reduce congestion. In the context of my Department, what could be more pro-motorist than offering concessions so that we have cheaper clean fuel and a cleaner environment? It is pro-motorist to enable people to drive along greener roads. I reject the proposition that the Government are anti-motorist. We are pro-motorist, but we are pro-clean travel as well. We want a cleaner environment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Joan Ruddock) has an impeccable record on green matters and raised some wider energy concerns, particularly security of supply and of the supply chain. She made some interesting points. A number of hon. Members referred to hydrogen, which is produced, essentially, in two ways; by electrolysis, and from materials that contain hydrogen, such as natural gas. The difficulty is that if we use electrolysis to produce hydrogen, we must produce the electricity cleanly so that the life cycle of the fuel is clean. Much of what we do depends on finding ways of producing the electricity sustainably and cleanly.

**Joan Ruddock:** I asked some specific questions aimed at encouraging the development of solar photovoltaics, which would be the renewable source used for electrolysis as part of the virtuous circle.

**Mr. Jamieson:** My hon. Friend will recognise that many of those matters are beyond the scope of my brief. I will be happy to make sure that she gets a full written response if that is appropriate. For me to try to gloss over those matters today would not do justice to some important questions.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) also questioned why we were having this debate when there were more pressing issues. Again, I say to him—in his absence, as he is not here—that he may want to take those matters up for a Liberal Democrat Opposition day. He posed many questions, yet found great difficulty in articulating Liberal Democrat policy in reply to the one question that was posed to him. I look forward to an on-going debate with him on these matters.

The hon. Gentleman said that I had said that our policy needs to be more hydrogen-based. I did not, nor did I wish to suggest it. The Government want to go for the low carbon use option. The policy will not necessarily be hydrogen-based, although it may well be. We have not backed any winner at the moment. He asked also about the green fuel challenge. Nine bids have been received so far; we are looking at the cost benefits of the proposals and the level of incentives that may be required.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Jon Trickett), as always, spoke with great knowledge and passion about the wider use of fuels. He referred to the current energy review, which may bring him some comfort. His was a well-considered speech and many of the comments—although beyond the scope of my brief—will have been well noted in the House today.

The right hon. Member for East Yorkshire (Mr. Knight) made a second maiden speech; hon. Members who come back here are familiarly known as retreads. He talked about his classic cars and, rather than clean fuels, he talked about dirty fuels for a moment, mentioning leaded fuels. The current EU directive allows 0.5 per cent. of total fuel sales to be leaded fuels that are suitable for classic cars and do not cause the valve seat recession that is the concern of the older cars with the softer blocks. The amount of leaded petrol being sold is very much lower

than the level in the directive. We will carry on with our discussions in Europe, but the amount sold is so small that it does not form part of the debate on cleaner fuels. That may give him some comfort. The only question may be whether the oil companies feel it is sustainable for them to carry on producing it.

**Mr. Greg Knight:** Whether the oil companies continue to produce it is a totally different issue. I asked the Minister to confirm that there were no Government plans to stop this very small usage by classic and vintage car owners. I hope that he can confirm that he has no plans to alter the status quo in this regard.

**Mr. Jamieson:** I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I have no plans to alter the status quo. I, too, am a lover of classic cars and often go to rallies. I have owned classic cars, although I do not at the moment. I understand his interest and the huge interest around the country in classic cars, which are an important part of our industrial heritage.

The right hon. Gentleman asked how many Government cars used LPG. He requested precise figures. I shall drop him a line, but I can assure him that, since the time of the previous Government, the Government car service has gradually moved to having more LPG cars. Indeed, the car that I drive is powered by LPG. He also asked about local authority objections to refuelling points, which is an important point. We are informed that the problem is less serious now. Following PPG13, we are encouraging local authorities to take a much more positive view of planning applications, notwithstanding the fact that they have to take into account planning and safety concerns that may be specific to a particular site. Nevertheless, we are asking them to use that planning guidance to take a more positive view of applications.

The right hon. Gentleman raised the matter of road humps and traffic calming. Road safety is one of my responsibilities. The safety record on the roads in this country is good in comparison with that of other EU countries, but it is not good in relation to the death and injury of children on our roads every year. Some traffic calming measures, although inconvenient, save lives. He needs to discuss with his local authority the safety contribution of such measures and whether there are other less inconvenient ways that still make that contribution. A blanket measure ending the use of road humps because they are inconvenient or cause noise is inappropriate; we must consider their important contribution to safety.

**Lembit Öpik:** As a member of the MG Owners' Club—rubber bumper, a nice runner and a long MOT—I know that almost all classic cars can be converted to run on unleaded fuel, although some purists may not wish to do that. However, in the long term, they may have to.

**Mr. Jamieson:** I am a lapsed member of the MG Owners' Club, and it is true that those cars can be converted to run on unleaded fuel. The hon. Gentleman is right; many will run on gaseous fuels as well. Older Members of Parliament, none of whom are here today, may remember vehicles with large bags of gas on the roof being used during the war; I certainly do not. However, they were inefficient.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Jane Griffiths), as always, demonstrated her concern about reducing car use and made useful and helpful supportive points. I noted carefully her comments about PM10s and the even smaller PM25 particles. She mentioned the importance of the "C" in CNG, which refers to compression. However, one advantage our country has is that we have the best piped natural gas supply network. If gas is supplied through pipes, it is not transported by road, as most other fuels, except electricity, are. It is therefore less polluting and less likely to be disrupted. She invited me to Reading; I can think of no greater pleasure than to accompany her to her constituency to see the things that she wanted to show me.

The hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Syms) demonstrated his customary good sense in our debate. I have come to appreciate his helpful and useful comments, and hope that my praise does not impede his long overdue elevation to the Front Bench. He raised some important points about publicising the benefits of LPG. I have undertaken several events to try to garner some publicity, but in recent weeks we have been somewhat overtaken by other issues. I shall certainly have further discussions with the oil industry to see how we can arouse more public interest. When we announced the changes to the PowerShift programme, we approached some of the car magazines to ask them to publish articles giving some publicity to the issue and we are mindful of the need for further publicity.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the quality of car conversions, which is essential. One of the elements of the PowerShift programme that we have reinforced is the requirement that the grant goes only to high-quality conversions that deliver the emission improvements and the necessary safety levels.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston is always knowledgeable on such matters and he made a detailed contribution. I remember our discussions in 1992 and 1993 about CNG; even then, we were clearly preparing for government. We are probably indebted to those discussions for much of what we have been able to achieve and many of the matters raised today.

The hon. Member for Rayleigh (Mr. Francois) suggested that we should have an environmental carrot instead of a fiscal stick. We have provided a fiscal carrot to achieve our environmental ambitions, and that is probably the best approach.

I was perturbed by some of the points made by the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster and I hope that he has not done me too much damage by describing me as a safe pair of hands at this Department. I hope that he will repeat that remark on Tuesday night, because if he does not I shall make sure that someone else does. He also suggested that I was a relatively young Member of Parliament. He may be, but I am at least young at heart.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the urban hot spots, which are important to us. Westminster was one of the first areas to introduce a refuse collection vehicle powered by natural gas, which is substantially quieter. I do not know whether that makes the men who operate it any quieter at 4 am, but it contributes to lessening the noise and pollution in the streets of his constituency.

I also noted the hon. Gentleman's points about curfews on heavy vehicles. If some of them can be made to run more quietly in city streets at night while causing less pollution, that could be a sensible approach to lifting the curfews. We are looking at packages of measures to combat engine noise and other intrusive noises, especially noises from depots, shutters and car radios. The package

*[Mr. Jamieson]*

will contain measures for cleaner fuel, but several other issues will have to be addressed if—and I stress the word "if"—the curfew is to be breached.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Turner) mentioned wind power and we were sailing for a while. I flew over part of his constituency recently—I did not quite cross it, which was why I did not inform him—and it is possible that wind power could contribute to hydrogen production, giving a complete cycle for cleaner fuel. I hope that he did not mean me when he talked of something being neither classic nor vintage, just old. He also raised other issues that may be beyond the scope of my Department, but they have been noted.

Cleaner fuels are not the solution to all our transport problems. Congestion will not go away because vehicles are cleaner. It is important to consider cleaner fuels as only a contribution, albeit an important one, to the development of a more sustainable transport system.

This has been a thought-provoking debate, and I hope that I have been able to confirm the Government's continuing commitment to encouraging the use of cleaner fuels. I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to debate this issue, and I thank all those who have contributed to this important and valuable debate.

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Canning Town): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion, by leave, withdrawn.*

## Newly Qualified Drivers

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Jim Fitzpatrick.]*

1.55 pm

**Mr. David Amess** (Southend, West): These are difficult and challenging times for us all and I wish that the subject of this Adjournment debate could lift our spirits, but the House will soon recognise that it is a very sad tale that I have to share.

There can be nothing worse than losing one's children. Tragically, on the morning of 26 August, two families were devastated when three young men were killed in horrific traffic accident. Two brothers, Glen and Gary Dineen, and Mark Baker ploughed into an electricity transformer. Their car exploded and they were killed. No one knows precisely how the accident happened.

Let me say at the outset that I have no intention of blaming anyone for the cause of this accident. I am simply concerned that the two families who now have to cope with this tragedy should be reassured that this mother of all democracies will take the matter seriously. They realise that they are not unique; this has happened to many families before. However, I want to reassure them that the House is minded to consider the proposal that has been made by one of the fathers involved.

Mr. Henry Baker—the father of Mark—came to my surgery a few weeks ago and shared with me his ideas for trying to change the circumstances in which driving licences are granted, so that such a tragedy could never happen again. I know that the Minister is sympathetic to some of the points that I shall now share with him.

Mr. Baker has organised a petition, which I shall present to the House in a few weeks' time. It is headed "Help Save Young Lives", and goes on to state:

> "In the early hours of Sunday 26th August a tragic accident claimed the lives of Mark Baker (18), Glen Dineen (18) and Gary Dineen (16). Although I attach no blame to any of the boys involved I believe that a change in the law may save lives in the future. I would like to see legislation forbidding drivers aged between 17 and 21 from carrying passengers aged under 21 until they had driven for six months after they had passed their driving tests and also a review for a graduated licensing system. Similar legislation has already been introduced in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. I realise this may be inconvenient for some, but if this legislation were to save one life I feel my son's death would not have been in vain."

I think that I will carry the House with me when I say that it is remarkable that this father has set about trying to do something positive as a result of this tragedy. I certainly applaud him in all his endeavours.

I have been furnished with a great deal of information on this subject and, as ever, I am grateful to the House of Commons Library for the information that it has gathered for me. I must admit that I had not been aware that this was recently the subject of an exchange of views in the other House. I had not realised that quite a number of hon. Members are interested in the subject too, but I suppose that I am on my feet now only because of personal circumstances in a constituency. I hope that some good will come of it.

I am informed by the Library that, during the 1990s, many states in the United States of America—I know that it is a much troubled country at the moment—moved to a system of graduated driver licensing. If the House is not familiar with it, under that system the driver moves gradually to full licensing.

There are three stages: a minimum supervised learner's period; an intermediate licence once the driving test is passed that limits unsupervised driving in high-risk situations; and a full licence available after completion of the first two stages. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in the United States has produced a blueprint for graduated licensing. The minimum age for a provisional licence is 16; some states have lower minimum ages but I certainly would not advocate that for this country. The learner stage lasts at least six months, during which parents must certify at least 30 to 50 hours of supervised driving. The intermediate stage lasts until at least 18 years of age and includes a night driving restriction starting at 9 or 10 pm and a strict teenage passenger restriction allowing no teenage passengers, or no more than one.

I fully realise that, if the House were to agree to such a scheme, it would be very difficult to enforce—we need only consider the fact that the law relating to curfews at night for youngsters has never been brought into force. There are great difficulties, but I personally have always been in favour of identity cards. I am proud to say that three ten-minute Bills in my name deal with identity cards. Indeed, the one to bring in a voluntary system was not divided on in the House—the first time ever that that had happened. This is a wonderful time for us to revisit the matter. It would be useful in changing the requirements for young people to have licences.

I know that the Minister is pleased that the Transport Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs conducted an inquiry into standards and training of young drivers in 1999. I am a member of the Select Committee on Health. Our Select Committees do wonderful work. However, I sometimes despair. The time that we have on the Floor to debate these issues is under pressure. I wonder sometimes whether the reports, which are worth while and contain evidence from expert witnesses, are given sufficient time for us really to consider the conclusions and then perhaps legislate.

The Automobile Association mentioned the findings of a British study on the peer group effect in its memorandum of evidence to the Select Committee. It said:

"The AA Foundation for Road Safety Research commissioned two studies into the younger driver from Southampton University. The first of these, published in 1991, concluded"—

this is the crux of the matter—

"that a significant minority of young drivers (some 35 per cent.)"—

a large percentage—

"could be categorised as unsafe drivers. It was not that these drivers did not have the skills to drive safely, more that they chose not to use these skills. It was believed that this was because they either obtained, or felt themselves likely to obtain, peer group approval for driving in this way."

I have five children, the oldest of whom are 17 and 16, and I know that everything that I am now sharing with the House will go down like a lead balloon with them—but when this House legislates it should take not what we believe to be popular measures, but the measures that we feel are right and proper. If we feel that it is right and proper to tackle this issue, we should.

All the figures prove that when youngsters first pass their driving tests and go out with fellow youngsters, without more experienced people, they are more likely to have an accident. There is no argument about that fact, which is reinforced by a second study that examined in detail the differences between the safest and the least safe drivers in the original sample. There is little evidence that the position has changed in the 10 years since then; if anything it has got slightly worse. Later I shall talk briefly about mobile phones, whose use by very young people is aggravating the situation.

Another AA Foundation study by Reading university, although concentrating primarily on gender differences in road safety, highlighted the effect of age as greater than the effect of gender. Young drivers—usually those of our own fair sex, Mr. Deputy Speaker—drive faster and closer to the car in front. There is no doubt about that, whether it is testosterone or anything else that causes it. They overtake more riskily, they pull out into shorter gaps and they enjoy speed and sensation seeking.

There is little evidence to suggest shortcomings in young drivers' mechanical ability to drive, and much evidence that a risky driving manner is chosen, rather than caused by poor training or technique. None of us wants to criticise our driving instructors or driving schools.

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I strongly agree. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I do a lot of work in the House in connection with death on the roads. Young people take people such as Michael Schumacher as their role models. Michael Schumacher is a brilliant driver, but we cannot use his skills on the road. We need to emphasise more and more strongly the point that for road safety a different style of driving is necessary from that used for going fast on properly designed tracks.

**Mr. Amess:** I agree heartily with the hon. Gentleman, who has long had an interest in that matter. Is it not tragic when these young people are killed, and all their friends turn up and are devastated? I suppose politicians are not necessarily the right role models for young people, as we saw during the general election, with the very low level of interest. It would be wonderful if we could find some real role models whom young people could connect with, to say that speeding is not a macho thing to do. I fully acknowledge the role that the hon. Gentleman has played in that regard.

The peer group effect is also reinforced in that: the presence of young male passengers leads young drivers, both male and female, to drive faster, and there is no doubt that the presence of female passengers leads to slower speeds for drivers of both sexes.

I am grateful for some information from the RAC—a valuable briefing prepared for me by the British School of Motoring. It says that there have been recent reductions in the number of road casualties, and I congratulate both this Government and the previous Government on everything that has been done to bring those about. When my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, West (Peter Bottomley), who is part of one of the husband and wife teams in the House, was a Transport Minister, that was always in the forefront of his mind. Last year, however, we still suffered more than 3,400 deaths. We are devastated by the events in the United States of America, yet the figure of 3,400 just trips off the tongue. The lives of all the families involved will never be the same again. There were also 38,155 serious injuries last year and more than 278,000 slight injuries. Those are huge numbers. The House would do well to deliberate on those tragic figures and come to some positive conclusions on how to deal with the problem.

*[Mr. Amess]*

It is a regrettable fact that a disproportionate number of those statistics relate to young, relatively inexperienced drivers and riders. Drivers aged between 17 and 21 account for only 7 per cent. of the driving population, yet they are involved in 13 per cent. of all injury accidents. If we are to meet the Government's casualty reduction targets, which I fully support, a strong focus on the new driver is vital, and I know that the Minister wants to pursue that matter.

Methods of addressing the safety of new drivers must start before they are of driving age. My wife would be the best person to ask about my driving skills. I have never pretended to be a wonderful driver. The other day, a Scottish lady of 100 who had been driving for more than 70 years had her first road accident. I applaud her. When people say that they have never had a road accident, I do not know whether that means that they have not been damaged or whether they are ignoring the fact that they may have inadvertently caused accidents. However, from what I observe on the roads, the overall standard of driving is not wonderful.

As someone born in London, I have seen how traffic congestion has developed. Nowadays if we stop at traffic lights—which is a requirement—when the lights change from red to green, unless we take off immediately we are likely to get tooted. The impatience of other drivers is appalling. I do not want to bore the House with my views on mobile phones again, but the situation is completely out of control. I drove in from Southend, and when I was stuck in traffic I could see any number of people with their mobile phones hooked underneath their arm, turning corners, with no regard for what was happening. Everyone seems to be doing it. I do not know whether there are enough police officers to enforce the law in this regard, but I can see very serious accidents resulting from the use of mobile phones.

The British School of Motoring believes that methods of addressing the safety of new drivers must start before they are of driving age. We need to reconsider the requirements for getting a driving licence. Skill and reaction times are very little to do with the driving performance of new drivers. Their attitude to owning and driving a car is key. According to the British School of Motoring, these youngsters, by reason of their age, feel invulnerable and capable of anything, yet they lack the experience necessary to function on the road.

Pre-driver education focusing on attitude—such as the British School of Motoring courses "Ignition" and "Signal", which have recently received funding from the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions—is a vital component in what must be a multi-agency approach.

Road safety should be a feature of the school curriculum. Courses designed to improve risk awareness and hazard perception are of the greatest importance, and provide an opportunity to influence the attitude of potential drivers. The pressurised environment in schools currently means that too often road safety is unfortunately glossed over. It appears that the portion of time given to road safety is inadequate, given the number of deaths and injuries that I have described, especially compared with the amount of time that is spent on talking about drug or alcohol abuse.

Once formal driving tuition has begun, it is vital that it is structured and balanced between tuition and practice. Tuition needs to be delivered in a structured way by properly trained instructors employing all the latest techniques. Practice needs to be facilitated in a safe environment and should be linked to the tuition received from the instructor.

The current test regime fails the candidate; once they have passed there is no formal requirement to take any further tuition. I can hear the howls of my constituents, as they say, "Goodness, David, you want to call us all in for another driving test, you want to have our ability questioned and you want us to be monitored." All I am saying is that the current arrangements are inadequate. If my constituents have attended the funeral of someone killed in a road accident, it might make them think again about being retested.

New drivers may have driven only 600 miles or so, yet they are able to drive anywhere, with anyone, without further assessment. A graduated licence system would be a logical step forward. It could prohibit the novice driver from driving a car with more than a modest engine capacity for six months. The number of passengers could be restricted. Obviously, I am aware of all the difficulties in that, but the BSM believes that in a car driven by a newly qualified driver of 17, each extra male passenger increases the risk of an accident by 30 per cent. That is a huge increase. Restrictions could be placed on the use of motorways pending additional training. Training for driving in adverse weather conditions might be considered.

As the Minister knows too well, the graduation of licences is not a new idea. That approach is currenly taken in relation to motor cycles. The BSM believes that better driving skills and driver behaviour would make an enormous difference in reducing the number of road casualties. The way in which we train new drivers and the standards that we require from them need to relate to the demanding nature of driving. We must make sure that systems are in place to protect young people as they venture out on to the roads. The right attitude is vital, and it must encompass the issues of alcohol, drugs and fatigue. Above all, learning to drive in all its aspects must be relevant to today's road conditions.

I end with a final plea from Mr. Baker. He would like a graduated driver's licence. Phase 1 would be L-plates. There would be a written exam. He would like to see minimum professional driving tuition hours for a set period of six months to one year, the introduction of computer-based driving hazard simulator tuition to teach driving on motorways and dual carriageways, night driving, and driving in built-up areas. I certainly think young people would readily enjoy that. The final part of phase 1 would be that the driving test would include a simulated test.

The second phase would involve the use of a P-plate probationary licence. That would ease new drivers into high-risk driving exposure in low-risk settings. No passengers under 21 would be allowed. Night-time restrictions would apply between 9 pm and 5 am. Road and speed restrictions would apply, perhaps on motorway and A roads, for at least six months. Finally, to enable those criteria to be enforced, deterrent penalty points could be imposed and driving licences would be carried at all times.

The final phase would involve issuing a full driving licence only after young drivers have gained experience for six months in a safer environment, when they should be more proficient at driving in high-risk areas.

I do not say this to criticise other right hon. and hon. Members, but all sorts of measures have been opposed since I have been a Member of Parliament. Hon. Members will recall that some Members opposed seat belts. I have never forgotten sitting next to my former colleague, Toby Jessel, who spoke from the Government Benches in a debate on a road safety measure. I did not quite understand what the measure involved, but he became very emotional. His only daughter was killed, as a child, in a road accident, and he was devastated by it. I simply use that example to show that, although the majority of adults, including hon. Members, understand the sense in what I have been advocating, a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House would oppose such legislation. If we are seriously to change the requirements, a Private Member's Bill would not be the correct way to proceed; a Government Bill would be necessary.

I know that the Minister and his colleagues genuinely want to do all they can to help. I know that he recognises how those two families have been devastated by the loss of those three young men, and I simply ask him to consider very carefully whether there is a way to agree on the issue and to change the law so that, I hope, there will never be another occasion on which an hon. Member has to address the House because of the deaths of young people on our roads.

2.23 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Mr. David Jamieson):** First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Amess) on securing a debate on a matter of such great importance to his constituents. I also congratulate him on the way in which he has conducted this debate, which has been a model of what Adjournment debates should be.

I fully appreciate that, for any parent, there can be no greater agony than the loss of a child, especially when that loss is needless and has come about in circumstances that should not have prevailed. I fully understand the profound concern that they feel and their desire for action.

Time allows me to put the matter into context and to give the detail of the nature and size of the problem. As the hon. Gentleman said, approximately nine people are killed on our roads each day. The equivalent of a medium-sized primary school of children is killed every year on our roads, either as pedestrians or in cars. Clearly, that is unacceptable.

It is also worth noting that road safety in this country is much better than that in many other European countries. In fact, the French rate of people killed and seriously injured on the roads is two and half times ours. However, our record for children and young people is not good, and even though our record is good on the whole, it is certainly not an excuse for complacency. We can see that the measures that we have been taking over many years have worked, and we must continue to reduce the casualty figures.

The hon. Gentleman will know that our 10-year plan is rigorous and sets high targets, including a 40 per cent. reduction in the total number of those killed and seriously injured, and a 50 per cent. reduction in child casualties. We are taking other measures, which I will not dwell on today, except to say that we are looking at vehicle construction and the engineering of roads. Those factors, as well as the quality of the person behind the wheel, contribute to road safety.

The hon. Gentleman may be interested to hear that the Swedes are taking a zero-tolerance approach to death and serious injury on the roads. Policies that stem from such an approach will provide different solutions to the problem. The Swedes are saying, "People will make errors, but we must ensure that those errors do not result in death or serious injury."

I hope that Mr. Baker and the other constituents whom the hon. Gentleman mentioned will contribute to our consultation on possible changes to the law.

I shall provide some background to convey the size of the problem and to give the hon. Gentleman an idea of the action that we have in mind and the measures on which we will be consulting. I assure him that we have an open mind. We want workable solutions that will be supported by ordinary people. We want measures that will contribute to road safety and benefit young people when they are first driving.

Driving is an acquired skill, and a demanding one. It is our intention to improve the safety of newly qualified drivers by making learning to drive more relevant to today's road conditions. The House should be in no doubt about the Government's commitment to reducing the tragic number of casualties that occur on our roads every year. We published our road safety strategy last year, and one of our key aims is to improve the way in which we train and test drivers. Our strategy recognises that better driving skills and behaviour would make an enormous difference to reducing the number of road casualties, particularly among newly qualified drivers.

Although we can be proud of the strides that have been made to improve our road safety record, there is more that we can do, and that is particularly true for newly qualified drivers. As the hon. Gentleman has so sadly shown us today, new drivers are over-represented in the casualty figures, and I shall add to the figures that he gave the House. During 2000, 19,618 drivers aged between 17 and 21 were killed or injured in road accidents. That age group accounts for 12 per cent. of the total number of injury accidents, but as the hon. Gentleman said, it accounts for only 7 per cent. of licence holders. Research tells us that very few of those accidents occurred before drivers had passed their test. It is when they have passed the test and feel competent that these tragic events happen.

Age, inexperience and, sometimes, poor attitudes all contribute to the high accident rates in the early post-test period. For 17 and 18-year-old drivers, accident propensity falls by at least 35 per cent. in the first year. The effect of age is weaker, but it is estimated that a driver starting at 18 would have about 9 per cent. less risk of having an accident than the same driver starting at 17.

It is clear that too many people are taking the test when they are ill-prepared. The pass rate for the practical driving test has fallen over the last 10 years to 44 per cent., and is even lower for those attempting the test for the first time. A survey by the Driving Standards Agency found that in around one in every 10 tests, driving examiners had to intervene physically on safety grounds, by grabbing the handbrake or steering wheel, or using

*[Mr. David Jamieson]*

dual controls. So candidates are taking the practical test when their driving performance is inconsistent and they run a high risk of making serious and dangerous errors.

*It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

**Mr. Jamieson:** Many learner drivers require a good deal of instruction in lessons immediately before taking the test. Although some candidates manage to drive at the required standard for the test's duration, they are not able to do so consistently, especially when they are unaccompanied by an experienced person or an examiner.

We are tackling the problem on several fronts. We want to guide learner drivers to take a more structured approach to the learning process so that they prepare for their driving career, not just for passing their test. We plan to issue a consultation document in the coming months to consider ways in which we can achieve that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman feeds his remarks into that. My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) also takes an interest in this subject, and I know that the hon. Member for Worthing, West (Peter Bottomley) has much to say on it. I assure the hon. Gentleman that all opinions will be weighed up and given careful consideration, especially those of his constituents who have such a close interest in this matter.

We need to get away from the culture that encourages people to do the minimum necessary to obtain a full driving licence. Research shows that test candidates who practise thoroughly gain more experience of varying types of road and traffic conditions. They make better test candidates and become safer drivers. We want to encourage people to get more driving experience in the relative safety of a supervised environment before they take the test. One such measure involves the use of training logbooks. Logbooks should enable learner drivers and riders to monitor their progress and development as they work through an agreed syllabus. Learners will also be better prepared for meeting the demands of driving on today's roads when they have passed their driving test.

We have introduced a voluntary logbook for learner car drivers. It provides driving instructors with a framework for training and gives trainees a checklist for monitoring their progress and a guide for practising. The hon. Gentleman will probably know that a great deal of learning in schools follows a similar pattern, so young people, especially those in vocational education, are used to working in that way. As well as car control skills and manoeuvres, the logbook covers driving at night and in adverse weather conditions. As stated in our strategy, we intend to make the use of logbooks mandatory and will consult on how to implement such a scheme.

Our proposed consultation document on improving new driver safety will also consider introducing a compulsory probationary plate scheme. Existing usage is low and there is little evidence that such plates will reduce new driver accidents. However, I am aware that some people support the scheme and it is right that we should give it careful consideration. I look forward to reviewing any evidence we receive on the advantages of a P-plate scheme.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to graduated licensing systems that operate in other countries. They aim to provide a staged progression from initial licensing to unrestricted solo driving. He suggested that, like learners, newly qualified divers should be accompanied by more experienced older drivers. I sympathise with that, but the hon. Gentleman alluded to the practical difficulties that it would involved. Again, we can consider that in the context of the consultation document.

However, we already operate one form of graduated licensing. The Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act 1995 places drivers on probation for the first two years after they have passed their driving test. It is intended to make new drivers consider their driving behaviour carefully before they commit offences or have an accident. If six or more penalty points are obtained, the licence is revoked and such drivers will be required to reapply for a provisional licence and retake both the theory and practical driving tests. Since the Act came into force in 1997, about 43,000 young drivers have had their licences revoked under the legislation and have been required to be retested.

We should not overlook the role of training for drivers after they have passed the test. Pass plus is one of the schemes that provides new drivers with post-test training in situations and conditions they may not have experienced during their lessons or when practising. The course was designed by the Driving Standards Agency and is provided by approved driving instructors for a fee. It costs about £100 and covers driving in towns, at night, on motorways and dual carriageways and in a variety of weather conditions. It is intended to build on the skills required to pass the practical test. More than 60 per cent. of UK motor insurers support the scheme and offer lower premiums to those drivers who successfully complete the course. In fact, it might be economic good sense for a young driver to take the course.

A number of other suggestions have been made for placing restrictions on newly qualified drivers. They include suggestions such as the introduction of a lower blood alcohol level, prohibiting the use of powerful cars, lower speed limits for younger drivers, prohibition on driving at night and limits on the numbers of passengers.

Inevitably, such restrictions would have advantages and disadvantages. It is right that such options should be considered carefully. The issues will therefore be covered in our forthcoming consultation on ways to improve new driver safety. However, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, such proposals must be workable and enforceable. That involves attacking the culture that he described and that exists among some young drivers—sadly, principally among young male drivers.

As I have already said, we should not consider new driver safety solely in terms of what happens after the driving test has been passed. We need to improve the training and testing of drivers, and a number of measures are already in hand to achieve that.

We want to raise the standard of tuition offered by driving instructors. The contribution that skilled and motivated professional driving instructors can make to delivering higher driving standards is vital. This extends beyond teaching learner drivers and includes developmental training for individuals and for companies, as well as remedial training for those who offend. Over the past four years a programme of reform has been in

place, including changes to the qualifying tests that instructors must take to join the register. We shall also soon introduce changes to the arrangements for dealing with appeals against removal from the register.

We will continue to keep the driving test up to date. Setting higher standards encourages more thorough training and ensures that drivers are better prepared for the pressures of today's busy roads and fast-moving traffic. We will also ensure that there is an effective system for monitoring and cracking down on unlicensed and uninsured driving which is a major contributor to danger on our roads.

Following the introduction of the touch screen theory test last year, we are pressing ahead with plans to introduce hazard perception testing. Hazard awareness is the ability to identify situations that might require a driver to take some form of avoiding action, such as changing speed or direction. It involves techniques such as reading the road, planning well ahead and having good anticipation—skills that newly qualified drivers gain only with experience.

The main safety value to be gained from introducing hazard perception testing will be as a result of the training that it will encourage. This training should help candidates prepare for the driving test and should lead to safer driving and riding. The Driving Standards Agency will issue a discussion paper later this year about the detailed arrangements for introducing this new element into the theory test.

The Government recognise the appalling sense of loss suffered by those who lose loved ones in car accidents. At present in such circumstances, families and friends are usually excluded from the personal support that is offered under the charter for the victims of crime. We are considering currently whether to change this. In February this year, the then Home Secretary issued a public consultation paper to review the victims charter. One of the key questions on which he sought views was whether those who were seriously injured or bereaved following a death on the roads should be brought within the scope of the revised charter. We are currently considering the responses to the consultation paper as a whole, and expect to announce action that we propose to take within the next few months.

As I have said, I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southend, West for raising this subject. I am sure that our forthcoming consultation on the many issues raised this afternoon will attract a broad range of comments from specialist road safety organisations and a wider public. Inevitably, not everyone will share the same views. Like the hon. Gentleman, I remember debates back in the 1960s about whether drink-driving laws or laws on the wearing of seat belts constituted an infringement of civil liberties. I remember the ludicrous arguments that we heard at the time. Today, no one questions those things: we have experienced a change of culture and of attitude which is welcome. It will, however, be the Government's task to weigh up all the evidence, and to decide what action we need to take to ensure that our roads become safer, especially for newly qualified drivers.

Nothing that I can say today—nothing that can be said in the House today—will bring back a child lost in appalling and tragic circumstances; but I hope my comments demonstrate that the issue of safety, and particularly that of young drivers, is at the forefront of the Government's mind.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes to Three o'clock.*

# Westminster Hall

*Tuesday 16 October 2001*

[SYLVIA HEAL *in the Chair*]

## Carers

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That the sitting be now adjourned.—[*Mr. Pearson.*]

9.30 am

**John Robertson** (Glasgow, Anniesland): I am delighted to have secured this debate to discuss an issue that affects not only many of my constituents but people across the country. I am confident that few Members will not have been approached by carers or carers' organisations in their constituencies highlighting the problems that they face.

I should like to acknowledge the care workers and care staff working in the UK, and the voluntary organisations that provide a valuable service to the national health service. This morning, however, I should like to focus on carers who look after a relative, friend or partner who, because of age, illness or a physical or learning disability, needs support and cannot manage without help—in other words, people who provide care through sheer necessity and not through a contract of employment.

The latest figures show that there are nearly 5.7 million carers in the UK, which is approximately one in seven of the adult population. The 1999 general household survey revealed that that number is increasing. For example, in 1999 there were 620,000 adult carers in Scotland compared with 500,000 only four years previously. The survey also showed that the number of carers providing support for more than 20 hours a week has increased by 13 per cent. since 1990. There are approximately 185,000 adults in Scotland at the heavy end of caring.

It must be recognised that providing care ranges from occasional help such as helping with shopping to providing continuous care. It is estimated that approximately 60 per cent. of carers who look after someone in their home provide personal care such as bathing, washing, dressing and toileting. A similar percentage of carers provide physical help such as getting in and out of bed, walking and getting up and down stairs. Approximately 27 per cent. of carers take responsibility for administering medicines, 60 per cent. look after someone with a physical disability, 7 per cent. look after someone with a mental disability and 15 per cent. provide care for someone who is both mentally and physically disabled.

The invaluable contribution made by carers should be properly recognised and supported. They contribute a great deal to society and save the NHS billions of pounds each year, yet they make untold sacrifices and often feel unsupported and isolated. The tasks involved can lead to physical and mental exhaustion and stress, which can affect the health of the carer and have a knock-on effect on the person being cared for.

Figures show that the peak age for becoming a carer is between 45 and 64. Carers in that age group can feel socially excluded as many give up paid employment and a career to care for someone, and that can lead to financial hardship. As one 56-year-old carer said:

"I sacrificed my career to care for my parents. I deserve some recognition for what is now my employment."

Another carer said:

"I love my daughter dearly, but I have paid the price of caring. Now I would like to have a life too and follow some of my own dreams."

Young carers also experience stress and isolation as their schooling is often affected. Many of them are unable to enjoy the social activities that their peers take for granted. Worst of all, many carers feel demoralised by the lack of status that their role brings.

The general household survey also uncovered some disturbing facts about the additional help provided, or at least available, for carers. Some 53 per cent. of carers who live in the same household as those they care for said that they were the sole carer. Some 75 per cent. of those receiving care from someone who lives in the same household had no regular visits from professionals such as doctors, district nurses or social workers. The proportion of households that receive visits from health professionals is declining and that increases pressure on the carer.

The Government have already made bold moves to address those difficulties. They are increasing the recognition that carers receive, and easing the burden on their lives. The Employment Relations Act 1999 ensured that, for the first time, those who combined caring with employment would have the right to unpaid time off to deal with difficult caring situations, such as arranging residential care. The 1999 Act encompassed a range of domestic situations, including those involving unmarried partners, and carers who have responsibility for people living outside the family home.

In October 2000 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions announced an extra £191 million aid package for carers; 300,000 of them could benefit from that in the next three years. Those measures led to the Government's consultation on the invalid care allowance, which was widely welcomed. The consultation period ended yesterday, and I look forward to hearing the recommendations that follow it.

The Government's proposal to allow carers who are over 65 years old to claim invalid care allowance for the first time is particularly welcome. ICA not only provides financial help, but confers recognition on the role that carers play. Benefit provisions for carers aim to maintain the income of those who give up the opportunity of full-time work to provide someone with regular and substantial care. It follows that those who have reached pensionable age do not sacrifice the opportunity of full-time employment, but as Age Concern rightly pointed out:

"many older carers are angry that they receive no financial support in recognition of the important role they play."

Extending ICA would help to secure equal treatment for all carers, and ensure that conditions of entitlement were uniform. I hope that the widely welcomed proposals to extend ICA to those over 65 years old will be introduced as soon as possible. There are strong arguments to suggest that the ICA should not remain an

*[John Robertson]*

income replacement benefit, but should be extended to cover the additional costs that carers incur through their duties. There is a strong case for waiving the overlapping benefits rule.

Benefits for those who need care are often reduced or taken away altogether. A disabled person who lives alone but needs help from someone outside the caring profession is entitled to the severe disability premium, but once the carer is in receipt of ICA, the premium is scrapped. The person who is cared for is often unaware of that rule, and ultimately loses control of how his or her care is administered.

The premium allows the disabled person a degree of flexibility, but that independence is eroded once the premium is withdrawn. Carer UK and many carers have told me that that is a continuing problem. The severely disabled often face the dilemma of deciding which benefit they should claim. I hope that the Government will look into the matter.

The consultation proposes to allow the carer to receive ICA for eight weeks after the death of the person receiving care. That will make a huge difference to the carer, and will help them not only to cope with the loss of a friend or relative, but to adapt to a new domestic and financial situation. I commend the Government's recommendation and hope that it is implemented soon.

I welcome the proposal to change the name of the invalid care allowance to carers allowance. That will direct the focus away from those cared for and toward the carer, thus increasing awareness, recognition and the status of the role.

Some organisations have called for an increase in ICA. The Scottish Carers Alliance, among others, has called for ICA to be set at the level of the basic state pension. The Government recently indicated that the estimated cost of increasing ICA to that level would be £650 million in 2001-02. However, to be entitled to ICA, someone would have to be caring for more than 35 hours a week. Some carers work less than that, but others considerably more. For the sake of argument, let us assume that the 5.7 million carers in the United Kingdom average a 35-hour week. The minimum wage is now £4.10 an hour. If carers were paid an hourly rate for their work, it would cost the country a staggering £42.5 billion per year. The most recent official figure is £34 billion but that dates from 1993. The introduction of the minimum wage legislation alone does not account for the increase—we must keep in mind the increase in the number of carers during that time.

As things stand, most carers earn approximately £1 an hour. Considering that ICA is intended as replacement income for those who give up or are unable to take up full-time work, the current rate is far from adequate. Carers' organisations commended the Government for raising the earnings limit from £50 to £72, which will then rise in line with the lower earnings limit. That figure has not changed since April 1993, and the new level will make some difference to those who need to combine care with employment.

Some carers are hidden carers. They may not even know that they are carers and, because they are not known to relevant authorities, they may not be aware of the help to which they are entitled. In Anniesland, the Princess Royal Trust has pioneered a number of methodologies in partnership with local GPs and pharmacists in order to identify hidden carers. For example, GPs have written to their patients asking them whether they care for someone; pharmacists have been placing surveys in all prescription bags and health centres have been conducting surveys. In order to publicise the benefits and the help available to carers, it is important that those hidden carers are identified. The holistic approach taken in Anniesland has been very successful, and I would welcome a move by the Department to pilot such schemes nationwide. Although the Scottish Parliament has responsibility for many matters relating to health provision, in this area in particular, examples of good practice can be monitored and adopted for the benefit of the whole country.

The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 gave carers the right to an assessment by their local authority to determine whether they were able to provide the required level of care. Those assessments can make an enormous difference to both carers and those in need of care. However, many carers complain that it is often extremely difficult to get that assessment, and carers' organisations have told me that the social services, health authorities and other relevant organisations are often unaware of their obligations. I urge the Government to ensure that those professionals are aware of the need for assessments and are equipped to carry them out.

Carers have brought to my attention the poor standard of information and support that is often all that is available when someone in need of care is discharged from hospital. In many cases, someone leaving hospital will require care for the first time and carers often find that they are left without instructions or information on where to turn for help. GPs also need to play their part in identifying and supporting carers, and that requires Government support. Surveys conducted among GPs found that many perceived that they would not be able to meet the carers' needs. However, carers often have relatively modest needs such as needing information or being directed towards sources of help.

Research also reveals that up to 50 per cent. of carers have suffered a physical injury while caring, such as a strained back. A similar percentage of carers said that they had been treated for stress-related problems since they began caring.

Many GPs recognise that they can prevent the health of carers from deteriorating by supporting them. That, in turn, reduces the strain on primary care resources. The NHS plan puts forward prevention as one of the five key challenges that face the NHS, and ensuring that carers receive support will be crucial if the NHS is to meet that challenge.

At the weekend, my mother's kitchen caught fire. She is almost 81, and I suddenly became aware that I was now her carer. The house was gutted and my mother was taken to hospital. She was, I am glad to say, all right. I was not at home at the time, but my wife took the call and we took my mother to my house. My mother has great difficulty in walking. The toilets in my house are upstairs, as are the bedrooms, and the kitchen and living area are downstairs. My mother could not climb the

stairs. She is an old lady who needs to go to the toilet regularly, and I had to carry her upstairs four times so that she could go to the toilet and then back downstairs to watch the television where she was comfortable.

Although I have a slight knowledge of what to do, it took me eight hours to get help from the local council's social work and housing departments. Can Members imagine what it would be like for someone who had no such knowledge? Clear and concise guidance is needed, including emergency and advice numbers. I hope that the Government will consider looking into ways in which carers' rights and the responsibility of local bodies can be publicised. Carers are often unaware that they can get additional assistance such as respite care, adaptations to the home, equipment for the disabled and meals on wheels. The 1999 general household survey found that only 22 per cent. of carers reported that the person for whom they cared received home help. Only 8 per cent. of those who are cared for received meals on wheels. Most shocking of all, perhaps, was the fact that almost 50 per cent. of carers reported that they had not taken a break of at least two days since they started caring.

I have raised a number of issues relating to the problems that carers face and I would like the Minister to answer some questions. What can be done about the unequal and confusing benefit system? What more can her Department do to ensure that carers are properly identified and supported? What additional help will be given to young carers? Will the Department look at ways of advertising the importance of caring, so that carers are more aware of the help to which they are entitled and so that key professionals are also aware of the problems that carers face?

9.48 am

**Mr. Michael Weir** (Angus): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland (John Robertson) has raised an important issue that affects many people throughout the country. Obviously, my particular interest is Scotland where, as the hon. Gentleman said, there are a great many carers. The hon. Gentleman rightly concentrated on the difficulties of the benefit system. For many carers, however, much wider issues affect their daily lives.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned holistic systems in Anniesland, but many other areas require joined-up government to consider the impact on carers and the persons for whom they care. I have some personal experience of that, particularly in regard to the care of children. Many carers of disabled children have great difficulty not only with benefits—including the invalid care allowance—but with the disability living allowance through which money is claimed for children. Negotiating that system and claiming the two allowances can be a nightmare. Many people are rejected on their first attempt and are forced to appeal, and thus the systems drags on. If a person is already caring for a disabled child and dealing with the associated day-to-day difficulties, it can be frustrating and depressing going through the benefits system.

Another problem is education. Hon. Members will be aware of the difficulties that those caring for disabled children face when they try to get them a proper education. Under the education legislation, local authorities can be forced to maintain a record of needs for such children. That provides the opportunity for someone to insist on provision for a child's needs, but that, too, can be difficult. Although some local authorities are good at operating the system, others are not, and achieving a record of needs can prove to be a real battle. One reason for that is that a record of needs can be a powerful tool for the parents of a disabled child in arguing that the particular educational needs of the child should be met. Local authorities face the problem of being under tremendous financial pressures. Education for disabled children is suffering, along with other education services, because of a lack of resources.

The Government need to look beyond benefits and examine the whole structure that is designed to help carers and their charges; that includes education and the health service. Although there is often integration between the health service and the social work department of a local authority, those services are overstretched and it is difficult to obtain the necessary level of care. Such matters must be examined.

Some of the proposals mentioned by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland are welcome. If the Government were prepared to extend the invalid care allowance to those over 65, that would be welcome and would find support throughout this Chamber. It is wrong that people over 65 cannot currently access that benefit. It was also mentioned that the benefit could continue to be payable eight weeks after the death of the person cared for; that would also be welcome. However, a longer-term solution must be considered. Many people give up their careers in their forties to look after relatives for many years, and it is extremely difficult for them to restart their careers later in life. After caring for a disabled person or elderly relative for many years, some people find it impossible to return to the job market. Serious work is required to find the best way of helping those people and to ensure that they are not penalised for their choice—one taken out of love and a sense of duty—to look after a disabled relative. It is important that the Government examine how to adjust for that.

The serious problem of overlapping benefits was mentioned. One of my constituents gave up work to look after her elderly mother. She was advised to apply for the carer's premium invalid care allowance, which she did. She was given the allowance but her mother's benefit was reduced by an equivalent amount. At the end of the day, she was no better off. In fact she was placed in great financial difficulty. The woman had given up her job to look after her mother, who would otherwise have had to be looked after at our expense as taxpayers, and she has been severely financially penalised by the way in which the benefits system works.

I was interested to hear the idea of a holistic approach that would consider all benefits together. The system requires simplification to avoid the situation where claims made for different benefits effectively cancel each other out. There should be a one-door approach so that the carer and the person being cared for can approach the Benefits Agency together and work out the best package for their needs. That would be better than having two applications going down different routes, both of which could take a long time to get through and eventually be pointless because they cancelled each other out. Will the Minister comment on that, and, when considering the report, look in detail at how the

*[Mr. Michael Weir]*

benefits system can be streamlined to aid situations in which both the carer and the person cared for are on benefits? A holistic approach must go beyond benefits. All Government Departments must be involved in examining how we can help carers, for example through education. In Scotland, that must involve the Scottish Parliament and its agencies.

Carers come from all age groups. We must examine how to support young carers who are looking after parents whose schooling is severely disrupted, and how to put respite care in place to prevent that. Those children's opportunities for the future can be severely damaged because they have taken on the duty of looking after a disabled parent. Job opportunities for those who have been caring for some years also need investigation. Will the Minister examine such points, and comment on them in her reply to the debate?

9.56 am

**Dr. Evan Harris** (Oxford, West and Abingdon): I am delighted to contribute to the debate. We have some time left, as there have been surprisingly few contributions from Back Benchers. However, those that we have heard make up in quality what we have missed in quantity.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland (John Robertson) not only for introducing the debate at such a timely moment—at the end of the consultation on changes to invalid care allowance—but for having spoken in such a clear and structured way. He has raised many issues, refusing to look at care narrowly. I am pleased to see the Minister from the Department of Health here although some issues that have been raised relate to areas well outside her Department. We recognise that she may have difficulty in giving very detailed responses to questions relating to education, or to the work of the Department for Work and Pensions. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland let several hon. Members know which areas he intended to cover and I am sure that that will aid the debate.

I hope that the Minister will be able to answer some of my questions or at least recognise that I have asked them. The consultation on invalid care allowance has been widely welcomed. The Liberal Democrat party proposed something similar. Although we are sure that the Government came to a decision separately and deliberatively, we are always pleased at such coincidence of intention about an important change.

The importance of all the proposed changes should not be understated. Sudden bereavement can have a disabling effect on carers. It is unreasonable to expect them to go straight from the caring place to the workplace—from the home to the job centre—immediately after bereavement. That problem will be solved if the Government implement the proposal to allow ICA to be paid for a further eight weeks, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland said.

Uprating in line with the lower earnings limit is also welcome. I hope that that will be pegged for the future so that it will be seen to rise as the lower earnings limit rises. There is nothing more difficult in a Member of Parliament's postbag than the complex benefit cases that we receive, especially in relation to the so-called overlapping benefits—a phrase that hides some of the complexities and three-letter abbreviations. When I get a letter asking whether the SDP is valid, I think back to my own political history as well as wondering what on earth is going on.

A huge amount of support is available to carers, if they only knew, through the Citizens Advice Bureau, through carers' associations, in my area set up by the Princess Royal Trust, and through tertiary referral from the citizens advice bureau to welfare rights organisations, which do tremendous work. I pay tribute to Peter Turville and his colleagues at Oxfordshire Welfare Rights, whom I have never known to lose an appeal. It is important to recognise the work that is being done.

It is difficult for carers to know that such help and advice exists. Many are too busy caring to realise that it is out there, or too stressed to access it. The Government should consider some form of wider advertising campaign so that the take-up of help and benefits is greater. The Exchequer may see some merit in unclaimed benefits, but it is the policy of all Ministries to try to ensure maximum take-up. It is such a complex area that there should be a way of ensuring, through outreach, that information is more accessible. For example, in my constituency a carers' centre has gone into GP surgeries to offer a carers' clinic, because GPs are often likely to pick up problems that carers are suffering as a result of work load or stress. Although that may not be the first thing that they mention to the doctor, it may be the underlying cause of their complaint. We should take a more holistic approach whereby GPs and other health care professionals think of referring a carer for social services assessment or reassessment and for help and advice with accessing benefits for themselves or for the person for whom they are caring.

As the hon. Members for Angus (Mr. Weir) and for Glasgow, Anniesland said, the earning potential of people with caring responsibilities is significantly impaired by their caring duties. Consequently, they are less likely to be able to contribute to a work-based pension scheme or to make provision through a private pension. Moreover, most of the burden of caring falls upon women, who traditionally have never had the opportunities in the workplace to improve their pension position over and above the state pension. Support for the basic state pension is—the Minister may not find this a fashionable word—a feminist act. We must deal with that indirect discrimination by making extra pension provision for women who may be caring for disabled children because of their traditional caring role or, owing to their greater longevity, are looking after a partner or parent who is disabled or otherwise in need of care. The debate about the appropriate level of the basic state pension and the minimum income guarantee—which requires means testing—has taken too little account of their disproportionate impact on elderly carers.

While I am on the subject of support for carers who are discriminated against, the Minister may be aware of the question of pension sharing for partners who are not married. I have participated in many campaigns concerning people—of the opposite sex or the same sex—who live together but are not married, one of

whom has taken on a caring role and has been unable to benefit from bereavement benefits from the pension scheme where the person cared for has a pension scheme in the state sector. Traditionally, the private sector has made much greater allowance for that, and it is sad that the state sector has failed in that regard.

The statutory public sector pension scheme has failed to keep pace with the modern era. A carer who has worked in the health service for his or her entire working life as a nurse—a relatively low-paid job—and who is caring for another nurse, will find that the NHS superannuation scheme does not recognise their partnership and position of care. I hope that the Minister will provide for less well-paid workers the same benefits that her colleagues and other hon. Members voted for themselves after considering a resolution for another public sector pension scheme—the MPs' pension scheme.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland also mentioned the importance of assessment for carers. There is a statutory right to assessment, but many carers say, "Yes, we have a statutory right to an assessment of our needs, but do we have a similar right to access the care for those needs that the assessment states is appropriate?" To judge by letters that I have received, the squeeze on social services funding that occurred during the last Parliament is a major problem not only in my constituency but in the whole of Oxfordshire and throughout the country. Funding for social services, which is so important in providing help and respite care for carers, was cut in real terms in the first two years of the last Parliament. Overall, funding barely rose during the last Parliament, despite an ageing population and the additional duties that were imposed on social services departments.

Yet again, Oxfordshire and many other local authorities face a squeeze on spending. It is the non-statutory duties—the discretionary provision of services—that are affected. Often, that impacts on support for carers. As we know, there is pressure on beds in the intermediate care sector. When there is such pressure, respite care, for which such beds are often used, is squeezed. Is there a strategy, plan or target—on this rare occasion, I will accept a target from the Minister—in respect of the availability of respite care beds in the NHS or, as a second preference, in social services? In Oxfordshire and many other places, the reduction in community hospital beds serving that function has proved damaging to respite care.

Of course, the Government recognise that without proper provision of respite care, carers are often unable to continue their work. Such a breakdown of care roles can lead to an acute hospital admission. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland rightly pointed out the amount of what is in effect unpaid work that the state gets out of carers. Official estimates of the value of such work range from £34 billion in 1993 to £42 billion now. Such figures show the possible effect on social services expenditure of failing to provide adequately for continuation of the caring role.

In both social services and in the health service, the pressure for early intervention in care should start with the carer. It is the carer who knows best how well a person is coping. In terms of greater care needs, carers sometimes know better than even health care professionals the likely prognosis for those in care. The early provision of extra support and information for carers can increase the independence of those cared for, which, as we recognise, is one of the Government's aims.

The story that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland tells about his mother is salutary. It shows that even someone who knows their way around the system can find it difficult to combine the burden of caring with accessing all available care in good time. It is important that we recognise the need to empower carers. That could be done by making available a recognised advocacy service to provide carers with advice. Does the Minister have plans to use NHS Direct as a way of ensuring that carers have access to, or at least the ability to be referred to, the appropriate sources? A one-stop shop is a nice idea, although we recognise that NHS Direct may have to refer, or continue to refer, to more appropriate sources.

The hon. Member for Angus raised the issue of carers with responsibility for children having to fight for a statement of special educational needs, a continuation of that statement, or the meeting of the needs identified in that statement. I remember having many long debates about this matter with the hon. Member for Redditch (Jacqui Smith), now the Minister of State, Department of Health, and I know that she continues her interest in that subject in her current duties. Local education authorities are variable in their ability to communicate as well as provide, and I recognise the tremendous work done by the National Autistic Society and the Independent Panel for Special Education Advice in providing advice to carers and parents who have written to me.

It is appropriate that this debate is followed by a debate on long-term care. I shall not stray into that area, but it would be appropriate to mention issues such as continued independence and people living at home who require long-term care. Those issues relate to the needs of carers and the appropriate treatment of that sensitive time when care at home breaks down, often because the carer is ill. The availability of prompt, appropriate and accessible respite for the carer, if he or she becomes ill, and for the cared-for person, needs to be developed to provide a safety net to enable people with caring responsibilities to continue in that role.

In debates on health service funding, not only in the House but in the media, I hope that more attention will be given to the important role played by social services and carers. If budgets for social services and carers are not increased in line with the needs of an ageing population, which are often recognised in the health service, but not in relation to those areas, there will be a greater gap between what is needed and what is available for the carers—the heroes and heroines of today's society.

10.12 am

**Mr John Lyons** (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I support the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Anniesland (John Robertson), and by the hon. Members for Angus (Mr. Weir) and for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Dr. Harris).

The debate has included some wonderful examples of care throughout the UK. No matter which survey or assessment we look at, one consistent point emerges: the

*[Mr John Lyons]*

number of people who are caring and the extent of the care that they provide in the communities that they serve are underestimated. I am also struck by the clear disparity between constituencies: no two constituencies seem to work in the same way. No matter where one looks, there are different approaches: in some places the approach is very good, but elsewhere a lot of attention and support is needed.

As was discussed earlier, carers need to have access to and clear and concise information about the available services. All too often, the attitude seems to be that if carers do not make an approach, they will never find out what is available. We need to reverse that. I welcome the efforts of primary health care trusts, GPs and others to identify carers in communities. That objective has been lost somewhere along the line. We must ensure that GPs and other primary care and social services have that responsibility.

Earlier, the point was made that we have a record of children's educational needs, and there is no reason why we should not have an assessment of the needs of carers and the persons for whom they care. Again, that could be done throughout the United Kingdom so as to ensure that we introduce regulations and support for every carer, on which they could rely, knowing that they have support for what they do and that that support is consistent throughout the country.

Clearly, if we are serious about joined-up health care, whether it is primary care or social care, we must ensure that we do not have only a theoretical approach. It must be a living reality for people out there. Joined-up government is not simply a political matter; people should be able to access services without hitting major problems. That is the core of the argument and the debate. People need positive support to try to make life that bit easier. Accessing services, benefits and support should not be an obstacle course; they should be provided in a seamless way, so that carers are confident that they receive proper support and that the person for whom they care has proper support, and so that nothing that is properly due is denied to the carer and the person being cared for. It is important that we continue to emphasise that.

We must re-emphasis and accept that caring occurs across the age range—from the youngest person to the oldest. I recently received a letter from a woman of 70 asking for support, and I immediately asked myself why the carer was not writing. The person of 70 was the carer; she was caring for her mum of 93. She thought nothing of that and had done it without support for a long time, but now—understandably at the age of 70—felt that she was reaching a point where she was letting her mother down and could no longer continue to do what she had done for years. We must recognise that that is not an isolated example, but that it happens throughout the country, from the very youngest to the very oldest—that is the age range of caring. We cannot allow people to talk about carers being of only one age because it occurs across all age ranges.

We must be serious and, if we value caring, we must put our money where our mouth is and say that caring is not a cost, but an investment. If we treat it as such, we will treat it in the proper and right way.

10.18 am

**Annabelle Ewing** (Perth): I thank the hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland (John Robertson) for securing the debate. Many important matters have been debated and there is a reasonable consensus among those hon. Members who have spoken, which will please the Minister. We all agree that carers play an excellent and key role in our society and none of us underestimates the importance of carers to us all. However, having talked to carers in my constituency and elsewhere in Scotland, I know that they feel badly let down by the policies of this Government and the previous Government. We must ensure that carers are treated properly and given the respect that they deserve, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. However, I must question whether the limited nature of the proposals that he mentioned will go far enough toward securing those objectives.

I will keep my comments brief because my hon. Friend the Member for Angus (Mr. Weir) has outlined several specific questions that he would like the Minister to address. However, a few points that have arisen merit particular mention. The first concerns the news that carers are to receive a payment after the death of their dependants. That is a welcome development, but why has a period of eight weeks been proposed? What is so special about an eight-week period? Why has a longer period not been proposed, and if that is not possible, will the Minister consider whether an element of discretion could be built in with regard to applications for such payments?

As hon. Members have mentioned, and as my mailbag reveals, a key problem with the benefits system, aside from its complexity, is that discretion is seldom built in to allow an appeal tribunal to examine the particular circumstances of a case and to make a discretionary decision. That is unusual, because an element of discretion is usually allowed, and that is the mark of a fair system. Will the Minister consider, with respect to the eight-week cut-off point, whether an element of discretion could be built in?

The need for more information has been mentioned, and that is of key importance. Many carers do not know what they are entitled to, and that is shocking. I ask the Minister to examine that problem, as it could easily be addressed.

Respite breaks for carers are not specifically covered by the proposals under discussion but, as the subject is being debated, I ask the Minister to outline the Government's intentions in that regard. When one talks to carers they say that one of the major problems that they face is that they do not have sufficient opportunity to take breaks from their arduous duties.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland referred to the £191 million package to help carers over the coming three years, but that figure should be put into perspective; £750 million was spent on the millennium dome, which was a colossal waste of money.

Finally, I wish to express my agreement with the comments made by the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members about the difficulties involved in the overlapping benefits system. It is cynical to offer with one hand what one takes away with the other. That matter should be addressed, as it would help carers, as well as everyone else who has to go through the tortuously complex benefits process.

I look forward to hearing the Minister's response to my questions.

10.22 am

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland (John Robertson) on securing the debate. It addresses a subject that is becoming increasingly important and the hon. Gentleman has personal experience of the daily pitfalls and concerns that affect millions of ordinary people.

It is a pity that more hon. Members are not present. I feel like the token Englishman, as I am the only contributor who does not represent a constituency north of the border. However, I am sure that that is an accident, as the concerns that have been raised apply to the entire United Kingdom—[*Interruption.*] I acknowledge that the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Dr. Harris) hails from west of the English border.

It is also appropriate that, as has been mentioned, yesterday marked the end of the consultation period on the proposed changes to the carers allowance, as it is now likely to be called. However, today's debate concerns the often neglected army of millions of carers in communities throughout the country, without whom the national health service and social services would be unable to function. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland said, there are approximately 5.7 million carers and many hidden carers—at least one in seven of the population. A carer is not only someone in receipt of benefits in recognition of that role. Many care for people on a day-to-day basis, and not only for those with high profile, long-term and chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's disease or Parkinson's disease. Many care for immobile spouses, people with learning difficulties or disabled parents, as the hon. Member for Angus (Mr. Weir) mentioned earlier.

The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Lyons) struck a chord when he spoke about older carers. Although it may have been rare for him to have been approached by an older carer in her seventies, as my constituency includes Worthing, which has the largest elderly population in the country, I regularly meet people in their seventies who are caring for parents in their nineties—many people in Worthing are in their nineties—and they cannot continue to do so. Some people have cared for elderly parents for 10, 20, 30, or 40 years and they are physically exhausted. That is commonplace in my part of the country.

It is not only the elderly who need care. Many cases involve children and young adults. For carers involved in such cases, the responsibility may continue for much longer than for those caring for elderly parents.

People are living longer, so the problem is getting worse. If we examine the complexion of carers, we find that most are women, in an age in which increasing numbers of women are going out to work. That means that the pool of carers is decreasing. Also, as we have heard, the impact on potential careers and earnings for such carers is severe, which has repercussions such as the lack of savings and pension plans to contribute to a carer's future prospects for long-term care.

Today's debate is an opportunity to acknowledge and praise the work of the unsung army of carers, to pay tribute to organisations such as the Carers National Association that provides essential support, and to raise the profile of everyday issues that affect the millions of carers who we are in danger of being taken for granted. It is in all of our interests to make the job of carers easier. Rather than placing more regulations and onerous requirements in their way, we should be asking them, "How can we make your job easier and provide you with the tools to do it?" Without carers enormous costs would fall on the state.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland mentioned some figures that surely underestimate the problem. Glaring statistics such as carers earning the equivalent of £1 an hour are appalling. He also mentioned, rightly, that the carers allowance is not only a financial help, but a recognition of the status of carers. I am aware of the debate on the problem of overlapping benefit. People who receive a state pension no longer receive carers allowance. Someone who retires from a job can take it easy, but there is no retirement for someone caring for an elderly relative, even at the age of 85, probably until that relative dies. There is no retirement for many carers. They do not get the carers allowance after the age of 65 if they are in receipt of the state pension.

I welcome many of the changes that the Government announced to the invalid care allowance and some of the proposals currently subject to consultation. We welcomed much of the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000, which came into effect just over six months ago, earlier this year. It is right that under the terms of that Act services are provided directly to carers to help them in their caring roles and to help them maintain their own health and well-being. We recognise the terms of that Act, which highlighted families as the natural and appropriate places for caring for children, which is absolutely right.

At the same time, as many hon. Members have already said, we need to recognise the extra duties being placed on already hard-pressed social services departments, in many cases without the full necessary funding associated with those additional requirements. For example, under the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000, carers grant is to be paid to local authorities at 100 per cent. of the £70 million being given for carers grants for 2001-02, which will ostensibly require no contribution from local authorities. Will the Minister give an undertaking that that will be so next year, so that money is not drained from hard-pressed social services departments through the back door, having placed the extra requirements on them?

An issue of local autonomy is involved, which must be balanced with ensuring that the money goes to the right places. Carers grant guidance states:

> "Local councils are expected to spend their allocations broadly in line with the following Government targets except where there is a strong case to be made for doing otherwise."

Much criticism has been made, in many cases rightly, of the prescriptive, ring-fenced nature of so-called additional funding for local authorities, especially social service departments, which has impeded the flexibility of local social services departments to respond to local circumstances. Beside that, however, we must balance the fact that in some cases funds are being allocated to improve provision for carers, especially in respect of respite care, but are sometimes arrested at source because local authorities view the money as a way of offsetting the costs of care that they already provide.

*[Tim Loughton]*

It is essential not to tip the balance too far either way. Social services departments are stretched on all fronts, as all hon. Members will agree from their experience with their constituents, whether in child care, care for the elderly, residential care or care in the community. This year there is already a budgeted overspend above standard spending assessment among social services departments of some £916 million, or 10.2 per cent. Authorities must spend more than that merely to fulfil the minimum requirements placed on them. In my area of West Sussex, which has the largest number of elderly people in the country, the social services department needs an extra £12 million merely to stand still and fulfil the extra requirements that the Government have placed on it. We received £7 million, giving a £5 million shortfall.

The problem is getting worse simply because of the demographics involved. By 2007, the number of pensioners in this country will for the first time outnumber the number of people under 16. Over the next 20 years, the number of over-85-year-olds, the most expensive to provide care for, will double to more than 2.2 million. The chances of an over-65-year-old man requiring residential care is 9 per cent., and for women the figure is 13 per cent. Those figures do not take account of nursing care. That means extra requirements on social services, care in the community and carers looking after people who do not enter residential and nursing homes.

An estimated 700,000 people in the United Kingdom have dementia—one in 20 of the population aged over 65, and one in five of the population aged over 80. As hon. Members have said on several occasions, there is a big disparity in the level and standard of guidance and care provided, a point made by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden—

**Mr. George Stevenson (in the Chair):** Order. We are in danger of straying to the next debate on care of the long-term elderly. I understand the connection, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman would bear that in mind.

**Mr. Loughton:** I am grateful, Mr. Stevenson. There is a strong connection, but I am concentrating on people with problems such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease who are cared for at home and are not in long-term residential care. The Alzheimer's Disease Society has said that 40 per cent. of those who care for people suffering from Alzheimer's disease have less than one hour a day to themselves, and that places enormous pressure on them.

The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden referred to respite care, which is an important consideration. I held a public meeting in my constituency for representatives of disability groups, which included many carers, and a matter that arose time and again was the shortage of respite care facilities for hard-pressed carers. It is crucial that the Government recognise the extent of the problem—the simple voucher system that they have introduced is not sufficient. It is crucial that appropriate cover is available for respite care and that places are available in residential homes, but 100 care homes are closing every month. It is essential to recognise the necessity of providing respite care while carers are trained. Carers need training and they need cover to enable them to undertake that training.

Earlier this summer the Carers National Association carried out a survey of 2,000 carers. It highlighted a number of weaknesses in the system. Those weaknesses are worth repeating. Hospital discharges are increasingly likely to be poorly planned, timed and handled. That was highlighted in the survey entitled, "You can take him home now". In 1998, 25 per cent. of patients had to return to hospital within two months of discharge, but that figure has leapt to 43 per cent., which has led to enormous extra pressure on the shortage of acute beds, particularly when there is a bed-blocking problem. In my local hospital, 10 per cent. of beds are blocked by people for whom residential care cannot be found.

The survey also found a huge drop in the satisfaction level of carers since 1998; 72 per cent. of those surveyed said that they had had bad experiences and 43 per cent. said that they had been given too little help. Carers are picking up the pieces when hospitals fail. The number of carers who receive a care plan has fallen from 28 per cent. to 20 per cent. during the past three years. The number who are consulted before discharge has fallen from 71 per cent. to 64 per cent. and the number who say that their comments and concerns had been ignored has increased from 36 per cent. to 45 per cent. Many carers are feeling unloved, ignored and neglected and the Government must address the problem urgently.

I turn to the need for greater employer flexibility. Many companies are rightly latching on to the fact that it is important to recognise the pressures of caring for children or elderly parents if their employees are to remain healthy and to contribute fully as employees. At the moment, there is one pensioner aged over 65 for every 3.7 working people in this country. By 2020, that ratio will have decreased to 1: 3.1 and, alarmingly, by 2040 there will be barely two people of working age for every person aged over 65. The elderly population is increasing rapidly and those who care for elderly patients are likely to be experienced senior employees in their late 40s and 50s whom companies can ill afford to lose.

I pay tribute to companies such as Centrica, which recognises the problem. Its employment policy provides free access to telephones for personal calls for people who must deal with day-to-day matters for their charges; it allows flexible hours and breaks for carers with additional paid leave to match the caring that they may have to undertake. Companies should be more innovative and creative in their thinking.

Carers should feature prominently in the cycle of treatment, post-treatment aftercare and long-term care in the community. They should feature in patient plans for those who require care. That would also benefit hospitals by reducing the avoidable re-admissions that occur all too often. Better information should be available from general practitioners to carers to take the pressure off them and reference has been made to carers clinics and that is an interesting idea. We need greater interaction between carers and social services to ensure the right number and level of expertise of home visits, the availability of the right equipment to those with

disabilities and the maintenance of that equipment. The need for respite care and training should be recognised and local support groups should be available. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Anniesland suggested that advice numbers and hot lines might also be available.

Above all, carers must be valued by the Government and all of us and their essential work should be recognised by the Government and employers better than at present. I shall repeat my opening comment that they save the country, the NHS and social services an inordinate amount of money and it is incumbent on all of us to make their essential and thankless job as easy as possible.

10.41 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ms Hazel Blears):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Anniesland (John Robertson) on securing what has turned out to be a very wide-ranging debate. The contributions from all hon. Members have given me the central message that the issue is not simply a matter for the Department of Health; the needs of carers and their families affect policy across the board. That message has been a benefit of the debate today. I shall try to deal with as many specific points as possible, but I shall also ensure that, where relevant, Ministers in other Departments are made aware of what has been said today to ensure that we provide a co-ordinated response to the many issues that have been raised.

My hon. friend the Member for Glasgow, Anniesland set out the extent of carers in this country. We have almost 6 million carers, including around 1.7 million who devote 20 hours a week to caring, and 855,000 who devote in excess of 50 hours a week to caring. That is an enormous contribution and we all echo the comments that have been made today and pay tribute to the amount of work, dedication, commitment and sheer energy that carers provide in looking after their friends, family and neighbours.

Most caring is undertaken by close relatives, but society is changing dramatically. In modern society, families are often separated, sometimes by vast distances. In times gone by, families lived close together or next door and could pop in and keep an eye on people. Today, families are more fragmented and it is more difficult for communities to provide the support structures that many of us have known in the past.

The age structure of the population is also changing dramatically. During the next 30 years, the number of people aged more than 65 will rise from 17 per cent. to 24 per cent. of the population. We hope that our policies will ensure—the evidence for that is becoming clear—that older people will be fitter and healthier and will enjoy many more years of active life, but we must recognise that there will be a much greater number of older people in the community.

Almost half of us have the chance of becoming carers and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Anniesland illustrated graphically the shock that many people suffer when they suddenly become carers and have to obtain access to the range of available information. Carers have a tremendous job in juggling their caring responsibilities with their work and families. Around 2.7 million people combine a caring role with work and, as the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) said, we must find ways of ensuring that employers and services support working carers so that they do not have to give up work when they take on a caring role. That is important economically, but it is also important in terms of social isolation and social exclusion, and the respect that carers need to be shown. Carers do not work simply to draw in income; many of them need to keep the connection with their work, through continued training and support, to ensure that their lives are not completely devastated by taking on caring responsibilities.

The Government have started from an important point, by asking carers what services they want to be provided. That must be reflected across a range of policies. We start by asking patients—the people for whom we provide services—and the public about their priorities, rather than assuming that we know best. Most carers said that they suffered health problems; many have financial difficulties and problems with stress and isolation within their communities. As hon. Members have said, we must ensure that we provide a joined-up response to what carers have told us, by utilising our various regeneration projects, giving primary care support—which is absolutely crucial in the community—and financial assistance to those in work and to those unable to work due to their responsibilities.

We must also help people make the transition from caring into employment, as that is a difficult time for people. The hon. Member for Perth (Annabelle Ewing) raised that issue, which is a key one for us. She also referred to the payment of the carers allowance for the eight-week period following the period of bereavement. That is linked to the period for which we pay the carers premium in relation to income support; clearly, there must be a cut-off point in the provision for that transition. The hon. Lady made an important point about the difficulties that people face when their circumstances change dramatically, but we are aligning the benefit system to reduce the number of anomalies in it. Hon. Members have referred to the difficulty in finding one's way around an incredibly complicated system. We recognise the points that all hon. Members have made about overlapping benefits—all of us would wish there to be more consistency in the benefits system.

I pay tribute to the carers centres that are springing up in many parts of the community, many of which are supported by the Princess Royal Trust. Those centres can act as one-stop shops, where carers and their families can find help with benefits and social activities. Hon. Members have not so far highlighted the wonderful things that many carers do when they get together; they provide a great deal of support for each other. They do not simply look for support from outside agencies; they get together in self-help groups, in social and family activities. I am personally aware of the tremendous range of facilities that carers centres can provide in our local communities.

We have also launched "Looking after someone", which is part of the Government website. More people are gaining access to the internet and to information online. The website contains a whole range of information for carers, about benefits, support services and facilities in their communities. Perhaps we should make an effort to publicise the breadth of information that is becoming available.

*[Ms Hazel Blears]*

We have taken a great deal of action for carers in the past few years, based on our strategy from February 1999, when we published "Caring about carers". That was a national strategy to ensure that people obtain information, support and financial help. When that strategy was being developed, the one thing that carers highlighted was the need to have some time out from their responsibilities; they need to find some respite and do something simply for themselves as a break from the pressures of the week. That is why we introduced the carers grant in February 1999, for which £70 million has been set aside this year. The hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham asked us to assure him that that would be available in future years. I can give him some good news: the £70 million for this year will increase to £85 million next year and to £100 million in 2003-04. That is ring-fenced funding, which should ensure that the services are provided. It is ring fenced because carers said, "We want that money to be available for breaks and respite care. It must be spent on those crucial services." This is an example of the Government responding to the views of carers who have told us their priorities. It will help local authorities to ensure that carers get the breaks that they want.

Exactly how local authorities spend the money is a matter for them, but we shall monitor their expenditure because we want to ensure that we obtain value for money and that carers obtain value for our investment. The balance between local discretion and national standards is a careful one for us to strike. When carers tell us what they want, we are determined to provide a system that channels money to them and their families to provide crucial breaks. We have already set up a system through the King's Fund that will evaluate that expenditure, so we shall be able to obtain evidence of what local authorities are doing.

It is important that we share good practice. Rather than continually reinventing the wheel, it may be that one local authority has a marvellous scheme from which others can learn; sharing ideas will be extremely important.

It is also important that we respond to carers' individual needs, such as when they want a break, the circumstances in which that can be arranged and what help is appropriate for the person for whom they care. One size does not necessarily fit all because people have different requirements in their families and personal circumstances. Involving carers in designing their breaks will therefore be important.

We have introduced the right for carers to have an assessment made of their needs. I am therefore delighted that there is consensus on the importance of caring services. Sometimes relatively small things can help carers to do their work better, such as practical help at home or the provision of taxi fares. Transport is an issue that has not been raised today, but it is crucial to the independence of carers and those for whom they care. It is important to try to help such schemes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Anniesland, he has pursued benefit issues to good effect for some time. The changes to invalid care allowance, which is to be renamed carers allowance to reflect properly the job that carers do and to give them the status, respect and recognition that is fundamental to our policies, mean that it will be extended to carers aged over 65. All Members who have participated in today's debate have welcomed that. The lower earnings limit will also be increased to £72 a week, which will greatly assist people who are able to work as well as to care. The allowance will also be extended to eight weeks after the death of the cared-for person. That package has been issued for consultation, which ended yesterday. It will be possible to introduce those changes by the new procedure of a regulatory reform order, which means that we can get it done faster than would previously have been the case. We shall do that as soon as we can.

In terms of financial support, from April next year the second state pension will boost the second tier pension of low earners, carers and some disabled people. There will also be a reduction in council tax for people with disabilities who live in band A properties and their carers. That package of financial measures will underpin the independence of carers and their families.

Several Members raised the issue of young carers. They are a hidden group who are not immediately visible in the community, which is something that the Government take seriously. Young carers are often faced by the prospect of many years of caring responsibilities. Ensuring that they get access to education and social opportunities so that they can, as far as possible, live the same lives as other youngsters in their communities is key. We must ensure that young people have access to the same facilities as anyone else. It is their right, and it is our duty to provide for it.

Our research shows that in years gone by the hidden group of young carers has not been as high a priority as it should have been. We have therefore introduced the quality protects programme to improve children's social services. We have also funded a project to help the Children's Society to take forward a young carers initiative. The society consults young carers directly about their views and needs and about exactly what should be put in place. It is fundamental to our approach that we will not tell young carers what they need. We want to talk to them about their lives and what they think is important. We want to develop a database and website to ensure that people have information, and a practical guide—a resource pack—for young people, so that they feel supported. They need to know that they are no longer the invisible carers, carrying a huge burden of emotional and physical care, and that people out there will provide accessible help when and where they need it.

We are making progress in helping disabled young people, through examining ways in which the quality protects programme can help a further 6,000 disabled children and their families by 2002.

The complexity of the benefits system has been mentioned, and the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Dr. Harris) raised the possibility of pension sharing for unmarried partners. That has been discussed in Parliament. His points about public sector superannuation schemes were valid and important. I will take up the matter in relation to benefits schemes, although on the many occasions when this has been discussed, issues about the structure of the pension schemes have been raised.

I will dicuss the complexity of the benefits system and the impact of overlapping benefits with Ministers in the Department for Work and Pensions. I recognise that it can be difficult for carers to find their way through the system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Anniesland referred to the serious problem of identifying carers. Much work is being done with general practitioners in that respect. I understand that an additional question in the census will enable us to identify carers in the community. When we collate the census information, we will be able to add further details to the effective database that we already have about where carers are located. We can then target the best help to them and their families. That is crucial.

Several hon. Members suggested a helpline or a one-stop shop for advertising services. NHS Direct is a gateway into health and social services, but we are also piloting Care Direct, which is specifically designed to target people who are caring, including those who are elderly, disabled or children. That will tell people about the range of services available for them locally. People often want to know what is available for them in their communities, rather than national information. Care Direct will provide a good access point into the range of caring and support services, including benefits, aids and adaptations, and the support available through housing and education. It will enable us to join up the various services that national and local government provide for carers and their families. We will be interested to see the results of the Care Direct pilots, and I can undertake to keep my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Anniesland informed about those services.

Important issues have been raised in today's debate. As the hon. Member for Perth said, we have had a degree of consensus, and I am delighted by that. We all want to do much more to recognise the enormous contribution made by carers. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Anniesland quoted stunning figures showing the value in financial terms of carers contributions. In addition we must recognise the time, energy and commitment that carers give to their friends, family and neighbours. Many carers in our country look after their friends and family because it is what they have always done and what they want to do. The Government must recognise that our job is to put in place support mechanisms to enable them to do that, while retaining their independence, dignity and respect in the community. We are determined to do that, and I am sure that all hon. Members want us to recognise the tremendous contribution that carers make to our communities.



## Elderly People (Long-Term Care)

11 am

**Mr. David Heath** (Somerton and Frome): I am grateful for the opportunity to introduce this extremely important debate. It is about one of the most important matters that we can discuss, because in the long run it affects us all in one way or another. It is a truism to say that the way in which elderly people are treated is the measure of a civilised society, but I have great concerns about the level of provision and the way in which it is organised. Those concerns originated some years ago, when I was for a time actively engaged in discussions with care home owners and my social services department. They were given added immediacy a few months ago with the very sudden closure of a nursing home on the edge of my constituency, as a result of which the residents, who had lived there for a long time, were given just a week or so to find new places to live. None of us would wish that to happen to elderly and poorly people, who are some of the most vulnerable in our society.

I do not use the term "crisis" loosely—it is often overworked in politics—but I fear that we truly face a crisis in long-term care. A crisis is not merely developing but has already developed in many parts of the country, especially where there is a preponderance of elderly people. The Minister will be familiar with the national figures. About 50,000 long-term beds have been lost over the past five years, with an accelerating loss of 28,000 beds over the past two years. That has been accompanied by loss of placements and loss of front-line care staff—not only in care for the elderly but across the board within social services.

In my county of Somerset, we are not immune to that trend. Indeed, the west country has a significant population of elderly people. In the year to April, Somerset saw a 10 per cent. reduction in the number of available nursing home places. Again, there is an accelerating trend—a further 200 beds have already been lost this year since April and it is reasonable to expect that at least another 100 will be lost before the end of the year. That is bad enough in itself. However, there is a specific problem within that bald figure, in that we have particularly lost places for sufferers from the various dementias. That is a difficult group of people to cater for effectively, and once places have been lost it is much harder to find alternatives for them.

Along with the loss of nursing care places, we have lost a significant part of our home care service. In some parts of the county it is difficult to provide an adequate level of domiciliary care, not least because providers are finding it extremely difficult to recruit and retain suitable staff. I underline the word "suitable", because not everybody has the vocation or the ability to do such demanding work for very little pay. It is hard to ensure that sufficient numbers of staff are in the right places. As a result, it is not unusual for there to be a four to six-week wait for the delivery of larger-scale care packages. That is not something that we in Somerset wish to see.

The automatic corollary of the loss of nursing home and residential home places is the problem of bed-blocking. In the south-west, there has been a phenomenal increase—54.1 per cent. in two years—in the number of delayed discharges. That is worrying in

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anybody's book, and it has knock-on effects for our hospitals. It makes it difficult, for example, to transfer patients from accident and emergency units to ordinary surgical or medical wards. That affects staff morale, because they are unable to do the job that they would like to do in the way that they would like to do it. Delayed discharges also directly affect the patients themselves. They affect their well-being in the ordinary sense of the word, but a prolonged stay in hospital can also often lead to an increased risk of hospital-acquired infections. That is a worrying prospect, given that, as we must remember, we are dealing with elderly people.

I do not wish to gloss over or neglect a major national policy difference between my party and the party of government in the United Kingdom, but I do not wish to dwell on it either, as it has been sufficiently advertised elsewhere. Of course, the difference exists only between my party and the UK Government; we have no such difficulties with our partners in government in Scotland. Nevertheless, in England there is disagreement as to whether personal care should be paid for. We believe that, as the royal commission said, it should be paid for.

The differentiation that the Government have introduced into the process of delivering service is artificial and deeply damaging. Deciding whether care should be paid for on the basis of who provides it rather than according to the type of care provided seems an absurd way to proceed. That has a particular resonance in respect of dementia, which I have raised before on the Floor of the House. It is impossible to draw a line between services that comprise personal care and nursing care. It seems that the only definition that applies is whether a registered nurse provides the service, and that cannot be right.

I am also concerned about the position of disabled people. They need support, whether they are in their own homes or in residential homes.

**Mr. David Drew** (Stroud): Another problem is the handling of information on individuals and homes. Is the hon. Gentleman familiar with minimum data sets? They would be a credible way in which to improve the handling of information, thereby helping those involved in personal and nursing care. I hope that he agrees that, at the moment, there is a real shortfall in the system.

**Mr. Heath:** I am happy to agree with the hon. Gentleman and I am grateful for his intervention. We need a much fuller assessment of individuals' needs; to try to make such assessments prior to, or at the point of, admission is frankly absurd. What is needed is a period of reflection, in which an assessment can be made and a proper database established and maintained according to the needs of the individual patient. Such a model is not unusual in other areas of care in this country; nevertheless, it has not been espoused in this case.

Having criticised the Government for this basic policy difference—as I said, although I do not shy away from that difference, I do not wish to dwell on it—I congratulate them on recognising that there is an immediate problem. I wholeheartedly welcome the new money that has been provided—an additional £100 million this year and £200 million next year. That underlines the Government's recognition of the real problem that exists in various parts of the country. I appreciate that this is significant money; it is not peanuts. However, it must be viewed against the assessment by the directors of social services and the Local Government Association, which has bluntly stated that a £1 billion shortfall exists in the funding of care for vulnerable people across the country. Set against that context, obviously much more must be done.

I will not be churlish. I welcome the money that has been given to Somerset's social services department to assist it in achieving its goals—I understand it to be £726,000. However, it is unfortunate that that share is proportionately less than the staff at Somerset might have expected. Traditionally, Somerset has been rather good at providing investment and the services that people need.

**Paddy Tipping** (Sherwood): The hon. Gentleman makes a strong point about the allocation of £300 million; some £100 million for the current financial year and £200 million for next year. I understand that the vast proportion of the £100 million goes to the worst performers, which seems to be a change in the Government's position. I hope that the £200 million for next year will be allocated on a more rational and equitable basis.

**Mr. Heath:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making exactly my point. We do not know how the money will be distributed next year, but I fervently hope that the Minister will tell us that it will be on a formula basis. There may be arguments about the basic formula, but the present lack of formula is a perverse way of providing incentives and recognising the needs of local authority departments.

What are the causes of the marked reduction in the number of care places available over a short period? A number of problems play a part in the decision to close a home or reduce the number of places. Fear of the impact of the Government's new standards for care homes is part of the equation. The staff of some homes know that such standards will never be met, while others have an exaggerated fear of what may be imposed on them in future and do not want to be part of that game. For some, the new standards represent the last straw that breaks the proverbial camel's back.

One argument is that a more flexible approach is needed that recognises the paramount needs of the residents and the fact that they are not always best served by the closure of a home. Closure of a home is the worst outcome for an individual resident. A more flexible approach may be of great benefit. Another problem is the shortage of staff, not only of trained nurses but of the untrained staff who provide home care in many cases. Such staff, who are traditionally low paid and predominantly female—the two often go together—are asked to take on extraordinarily complex and demanding tasks. Many of us would never wish to find ourselves engaged in such tasks.

The competition with the private sector means that many people are tempted away by easier and better paid billets outside the public sector. The arrival of a new

supermarket is a disaster for the local care homes and social services providers. A Tesco store opens and suddenly no staff are left to make beds and care for elderly residents in homes. We must recognise that market forces demand that something be done to provide better pay and conditions for the staff in this important sector.

Another element is property values. In my part of the world we have seen those values increasing, especially at the upper end of the market. Large country houses have traditionally been used for residential homes, and the property value of such buildings is vastly in excess of the value of the business. The constant temptation must be to forget about running a business and take the capital sum offered by someone in the City who wants to play at being a squire in Somerset. That is happening more and more often.

The fees payable also constitute a problem. The average increase in local authority fees paid to care homes is around 2 per cent., as against a 5 per cent. average increase for those who pay privately for residential or nursing care. The equation does not work. The problem for care home owners is that they do not have dealings with the rest of the country—they deal only with the social services department where they are situated. As far as those owners know, the local authority is simply mean and not prepared to pay them the rate for the job. That is certainly not the case in Somerset, however, and I am sure that is not the case in the vast majority of social services areas, but because owners see only those with which they have dealings, they do not understand that this is a national issue. Can local authorities afford to pay sustainable fees to maintain the sector and placements that they need?

We often say that throwing cash at a problem is not an answer, but in this case cash is the most important single factor. We must get enough money into the system to achieve sustainable fee levels without losing the other care professionals for which social services departments are responsible. Many departments could be forced to provide cash for care services for the elderly at the expense of other important services for vulnerable people.

We need to find a way of putting more cash into the system, although not preferentially—a point made by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Paddy Tipping). We must not produce fee competition between neighbouring authorities. Some authorities may find that, because they have responded poorly in the past, they have more money in their budget and can pay higher fees to attract staff and placements from neighbouring authorities. That cannot be the answer, nor can it be the answer simply to exhort social services departments to do more. We know from the Local Government Association that three quarters of all social services departments overspent their budgets last year, which represents a total overspend of £183 million. That is a substantial overspend; if I were a council leader, I would be worried about my social services department, or any other department, overspending to such an extent. There is clearly more than a little strain on the system when social services expenditure by local authorities is £1 billion over the standard spending assessment—the Government assessment of what those departments should be spending. The system is not functioning properly.

What are the answers? There are no easy answers and I do not want to abuse the intelligence of anyone listening to this debate by pretending that there are. However, we should have local sustainable strategies that involve the private sector, the home care sector, the user groups—if that is the appropriate term—the health authorities and the local authorities. I know that in Somerset that is very much part of the way in which the local authority has thought previously and continues to think about dealing with the problems. However, the Government must support sensible strategies that are put forward with the cash to make them work.

To return to a matter that was raised earlier, there is a need to identify what funds will be available in the future. They should be on a formula basis, not a speculative favoured-son basis or any other; they should be fair and respond to demonstrable need. The funding stream should continue into the future.

It is important not to forget that there is a need to respond to the increasing demand for home care and domiciliary care. Many years ago when I was in practice as an optician, I did a lot of domiciliary work and I was not paid a penny for it. There was no recognition of domiciliary work in optics at that time and I was paid as if I was in my surgery. The fact that I had driven halfway across the countryside to see one bedridden elderly lady was neither here nor there to the national health service. It did not care about that, or whether I did it or not. However, I did, and so did many other professionals. We must recognise that domiciliary care is promoted to give people the independence to live in their own home. If we are to promote that, we must fund it properly and recognise the difficulties that it involves. We also need flexibility in the application of care home standards, and the Government would do well to signal that clearly to the private home sector so that some of its worst fears, at this stage, are allayed.

Most important, we need a national review of the capacity that we have—or rather do not have—to deal with long-term care. We must recognise that there is a long lead-in for any changes in that capacity. Homes are not built overnight, and staff are not trained overnight. There is a significant shortfall in capacity, and we need to do something about it nationally, so we need a clear national strategy.

I would love the consensus that exists in Scotland to extend to England and, dare I say, Wales. At present it is not on the table, although it may be. Policies in Scotland sometimes have a habit of eventually seeping their way through the system and become the national policy of the United Kingdom Government. The battle may not be lost. Meanwhile, I urge the Minister to address the matter, which is of desperate importance. I suspect that many hon. Members will recount their own constituency experiences and express that same view.

11.23 am

**Hywel Williams** (Caernarfon): I am particularly glad to be given the opportunity to speak because I wrote Plaid Cymru's submission to the Sutherland royal commission on long-term care. We in Plaid Cymru agreed with the recommendations of the royal commission and many older people in Wales looked forward to the Government acting on its

*[Hywel Williams]*

recommendations, particularly those on funding. The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath) might not have wanted to dwell on the differences between Scotland and Wales and England, but we in Plaid Cymru and, certainly, our colleagues in the Scottish National party see the differences as highly significant.

We were all disappointed when the Government acted because, as we all know, free personal care was introduced in Scotland, but not in Wales and England. The matter of funding is particularly significant in my constituency and my part of Wales. In Gwynedd, we have a particularly high level of residential care for older people, and a relatively higher percentage of older people who may be subject to charging. We also face difficulties because much of the residential care stock is old and requires significant investment to bring it up to standard without compromising the standard of care provided to current and future residents.

Furthermore, levels of personal wealth in my constituency are low. Inherited capital from the sale of a parent's house has a particular significance for the local economy. That inherited capital is, of course, disappearing—I have had visits to my surgeries from constituents who are worried about that because they are passing on to many children shares of the small amounts of capital that they have accumulated.

My constituency also has a large number of care businesses, many of which are run by small, local operators. They are not large businesses or companies; they are often run by husband-and-wife teams. Those businesses are now facing greater uncertainty in their planning, and reference to that was made earlier.

In respect of the royal commission, a partial answer was given to the problem of funding in Wales and England. That partial answer has led to further problems. The system is unpopular—that goes without saying—and one might almost say that it is in disrepute. People who have saved all their lives see their savings reduced and lost to them and their children merely because they are in need through no fault of their own. That is a tax on need.

How does one distinguish—this is an old question—between social and medical care? I taught social care workers for many years in my previous career, and I certainly find it difficult to distinguish between those two types of need. Again, there is the well-rehearsed question: what is a social bath, and what is a medical bath? To ask another question: is putting on incontinence pads a medical matter, and putting on trousers over them a social one?

**Mr. George Stevenson (in the Chair)**: Order. We have a problem with the microphones. If hon. Members move forward to the front row, everything will be okay. However, that does not guarantee that everyone who wishes to speak will be called. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for interrupting his speech.

**Hywel Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Stevenson. Being heard is much better than not being heard.

The questions that I was posing are old ones, and clearly absurd. However, they are not the result of professional absurdity. Such questions arise directly from the Government's decision to differentiate between the medical and social elements. Deciding on what is a social need and a medical need takes time. Again, that is not the fault of the professionals involved. I understand that decisions have been held up by local panel meetings and constituents have approached me asking to hurry up the process of deciding who should be responsible. However, a system that is intrinsically complicated cannot be hurried up. That is the response that I have had from social services.

As I noted earlier, care providers in my constituency have postponed decisions on large capital investments because of the uncertainty about whether to build on the basis of meeting medical need or social need. Those are real decisions, and extra costs are involved. The effect is that care beds are being lost or denied, and there are delays in discharge from hospital, for example.

We in Wales want a system of care funding that is straightforward, effective and fair. From our point of view, the people of Wales, through our National Assembly, should take the decision on the nature of that system of funding. As Sutherland said, people who are in need should have that need met whatever their personal circumstances. That is the civilised response, and it is also Plaid Cymru's view.

11.29 am

**Mr. Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath) on initiating this important debate today, and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in it. I shall discuss two main issues. I do not expect my hon. Friend the Minister to give way to us today, but I hope that she will take note of what we say and consider possible future changes.

I profoundly believe that long-term care for all elderly people should be free at the point of use, and that we should implement the royal commission's recommendations and move to the Scottish position now. Many Labour Members feel the same as I do, and we shall not rest until that change takes place. I recommend to the Minister the memorandum prepared by Unison, the trade union for which I had the honour of working for many years, which has made an excellent case in much more detail than I can go into this morning.

National assistance limits on personal resources were first introduced more than 50 years ago. If the figure used then were indexed forward, it would come to more than £200,000, not the £18,500 that is now the limit below which local authorities pay. That would constitute not means testing but a wealth tax; indeed, I might suggest that if the Government want to raise extra revenue they consider a proportionate, progressive equitable wealth tax that would help pay for long-term care.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Hywel Williams) mentioned the problem of inherited capital, which will have a significant effect on the housing market. Sustaining owner occupation now depends to a large extent on inherited capital—on parents handing on the equity in their houses to their children. If that is increasingly taken away as the population ages, it could create housing difficulties as well as long-term care difficulties, with which the Government will have to deal in the longer term.

The second issue that I shall discuss is local authority homes. My constituency contains three local authority care homes that are currently under threat of closure. The Government, no doubt for very good reasons, have decided to raise the standards required of care homes. Two of the care homes involved were purpose built, and I know that they are extremely good, because I have visited them. Indeed, in one of them my late mother-in-law lived for some time and was very happy, receiving excellent care from permanently employed, properly paid, trade union-organised local authority staff. I want those homes to remain open and in operation. However, if the new standards are imposed and they have to be modernised and upgraded without that being fully funded by central Government, the local authority will not be able to afford it, and will effectively be forced to close them and to put more of their long-term care residents into the private sector instead of in the public sector homes available at present.

We have already heard about problems with long-term care in private homes, and the fact that some homes are finding it difficult to make a profit. Whether profit is appropriate in the case of such a service is another issue, but they are finding it difficult to sustain those homes financially and are having a hard time. Property prices are rising, and some see the advantage of selling off, possibly for conversion to owner occupation, as that would be a more profitable use of their resources.

I ask the Minister seriously to consider supporting local authorities that may be forced to close their homes because they cannot afford to modernise them in line with the requirements of the new standards—or, alternatively, to reconsider the care standards. Some purpose-built homes that are still reasonably good—the homes in Luton are extremely good—do not quite match the required standards. We could build new homes to the required standards but, for the time being at least, keep the old homes, as they are, without pressing local authorities to modernise them—in effect, to rebuild them—simply because the rooms might be too small. If and when those standards are imposed on the private sector, the costs of meeting them would be too high, and many private homes would therefore have to close. The homes would be unprofitable, and they would be sold. Indeed, there is a desperate shortage of rented property in my constituency, and the private sector could do very well by selling off its homes or converting them into flats for owner occupation. That would lead to a crisis; a shortfall in care home provision would be created in my constituency.

I therefore make two pleas to the Minister: look again at free long-term care, and give a little support to local authorities that might be forced to close their homes. Although I am publicly opposing such closures, I also appreciate that my local authority faces a desperate financial problem.

**Mr. George Stevenson (in the Chair):** Many hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate, so I ask those who are called to speak to be as brief as possible.

11.36 am

**Dr. Andrew Murrison** (Westbury): The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath), who represents a constituency that neighbours mine, is extremely lucky, as Somerset has been marked out for special funding from the £300 million package that the Government announced on 9 October 2001. That announcement did not carry with it criteria for the award of additional funding, and as Wiltshire has done rather badly out of it, I should be grateful for the Minister's clarification on that matter.

Earlier this year, my Wiltshire colleagues highlighted the inadequate settlement for education funding in the county, and it appears that similar treatment is now being meted out to the other end of the spectrum—the elderly people of Wiltshire.

The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome and I share an interest in the Royal United Hospital, Bath, and I welcome the additional money that has been allocated to Gloucestershire, Somerset and Bath, in so far as it might ease bed blocking at the RUH.

Wiltshire has the longest waiting list for residential and nursing home placements in the south-west that are funded by local authorities, despite the fact that the county's health authority funds 50 places through transfer of funds to the county council, and also that a joint review conducted 12 months ago said that Wiltshire's social services were among the nation's best. I fear that additional funding for neighbouring counties and authorities will, paradoxically, have a bad effect on poorly resourced Wiltshire because neighbouring authorities will be allowed to buy up services from Wiltshire homes and Wiltshire's elderly will be adversely affected. I urge the Minister to re-examine the case for including Wiltshire in the list of 50 authorities earmarked for additional funding on 9 October, because the county's elderly deserve a better settlement than the one that has been offered.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

11.37 am

**Dr. Vincent Cable** (Twickenham): The competition among hon. Members to speak reflects the widespread concern about the matter under discussion.

The story that was told by my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath) reflected the experiences of all hon. Members. I wrote a letter to the Minister a couple of weeks ago describing the problems of local social services in relation to spending, such as spill-over in terms of cuts in provision, bed blocking, and upstreaming local hospitals. My letter crossed in the post with the Minister's offer of more funding, so I do not wish to pursue that point.

Instead, I want to highlight another aspect of the problem that has come to the surface as a result of a lead story that appeared last week in, I think, the *Sunday Express*. It referred to what it characterised as a scandal in a residential home in my constituency. The home is called Lynde House, and it is part of the Westminster Healthcare group. I want to refer to the case, as it serves to illustrate some of the broader problems that are being experienced in the private sector.

The institution, which is part of a large group, is in many ways at the top end of the market; the typical fee is about £660 per week, as it is very well appointed. It appears to be a luxurious home, and it is, no doubt, a very good one in many respects. However, I started to receive serious complaints several months ago, and I

*[Dr. Vincent Cable]*

have now received more than 20 well-documented cases. They were discussed, often in highly emotional terms, at a public meeting that was organised by a local parish priest. The complaints resolved themselves into two types. First, there were complaints about the treatment of physical conditions. For example, elderly people with incontinence problems were left for long periods without being changed and did not get a response when they rang the bell. The underlying problem was that described by my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome. There is a serious problem in the labour market, with shortages of nursing and other care staff. Staff are badly paid and poorly motivated. There is a high staff turnover and employees have little commitment. Within a context of highly deficient and unsatisfactory management, the elderly people in the home suffered.

Secondly, when people and their relatives complained and endeavoured to make the problems known, they met a rather unsympathetic management. In some cases, very old ladies were expelled or suspended from the home, or required to sign letters promising not to complain in future. I was confronted with the rather chilling phrase that these old ladies were "destabilising management". That illustrated the profoundly unsatisfactory culture that had developed, and it deserved to be publicised.

In terms of the broad lessons to be learned, I highlight two issues and would like to hear the Minister's response to them. First, although inspection will be improved under the new care standards system, the current system rests heavily on the work of health authorities and their inspection units. The case that I have mentioned was difficult to deal with because the health authority had inspected the home and given it a clean bill of health. I have wondered why, and I suspect that it might be because inspection is rather formal. It involves a lot of ticking of boxes and physical measures, but does not get to grips with the quality of care or intangible things such as problems with client-management relations, which in this case were not picked up in the inspection, despite being on the record. It is also possible that because the inspection units work with the local providers rather than exercising tough, independent assessment the relationship becomes too cosy.

Either explanation may be correct, but it is clear in this case that the inspection system failed. I have asked the chairman of the health authority, who is being very co-operative, to investigate the matter, but I think that the way forward is to have an independent overview. Someone independent of the provider and the health authority should be brought in to examine what is happening and to evaluate the complaints and the way in which they have been dealt with.

The second general point, which goes to the heart of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome, is that such situations arise largely because of the problems of market supply and demand. There is a problem with contracting supply. Those who remain in the market, such as the home that I have described, are able to charge considerable fees. They can cut corners because people have few choices and they can bring pressure to bear on complainants because plenty of other people are willing to come there. That is the cruel logic of supply and demand.

I do not wish to aggravate the problems in my area by creating such a stink that the home is obliged to close. We need it, as we need other residential homes, but I want improved quality, as I am sure do the relatives. That will come only when there is improved supply. I share the views that have been raised by many hon. Members that it is crucial to examine care standards, not to suffocate but to improve the supply of accommodation—whether that comes through the public or the private sector.

11.43 am

**Paddy Tipping** (Sherwood): The debate is important and timely, and concern has been expressed by many hon. Members in the Chamber this morning. The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath) described long-term care in Somerset as being in crisis. I am not sure whether long-term care in Nottinghamshire is in crisis, but there are certainly real problems, especially in the nursing home sector. North Nottinghamshire health authority reports the loss of almost 150 beds and Nottingham health authority reports the loss of 150 beds this year. That is 300 beds lost from the stock, with two consequences. First, when a nursing home closes immediately, the care that is given to the frail people who are transferred to another home is not appropriate and leads to severely diminishing life chances. Secondly, the choice that is available to elderly people and their families diminishes as the stock reduces.

There are three pressures on the nursing home sector. The first is the general increase in costs due to improved standards; the second is the minimum wage, which I support; the third is the need for extra qualified nursing support in the nursing sector, which involves a demand issue—some nursing homes have not been able to recruit the necessary staff at the right price.

Those issues also relate to the residential sector. Many families face financial difficulties in respect of so-called third-party costs. As the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome said, local authorities increase their payments for residential care by roughly 2 per cent. a year. The real increase in cost has been far greater than that, and relatives have been asked to meet the gap by entering into contracts, the terms of which have varied. Put simply, many families are struggling severely to meet their share of the increase in costs.

I welcome wholeheartedly last week's announcement of £300 million—£100 million in this financial year and £200 million in the next. Will the Minister spell out how that allocation has been made, especially in this financial year? Having spent some time looking at the figures, I can see that cities such as Birmingham and Sheffield have done particularly well. Clearly, they have real needs. However, I have an impression—I put it no more strongly than that—that the top 50 worst performers are being rewarded, while those local authorities that have worked hard in the past, and have not talked of crisis, have not been adequately rewarded.

How will the £200 million for next year be allocated? It is a question of equity. It is important that elderly people across the country are treated with fairness, and

it cannot be right if local authorities that have not achieved are rewarded. Indeed, that runs against the bulk of Government policy.

The debate is primarily about residential and nursing care, but the real issue is domiciliary support. Good domiciliary support costs a great deal. The cost of providing meals, home helps, IT and aids and adaptations means that it can often be more expensive to keep a person in their home than in residential care.

In real terms, significant sums of money are going into public services—an increase of between 5 and 6 per cent. in the funding for the national health service and for education each and every year—but social services departments are badly stretched. They do not have that amount of growth; they have problems with their budgets. There is such a problem in Nottinghamshire, and I want assurances that there will be adequate funding so that the problem does not become a crisis.

11.49 am

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (North Cornwall): I entirely endorse the point about domiciliary care made by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Paddy Tipping), but in the interests of brevity I shall not go over it again. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath) on his comprehensive introduction to the debate, in which he said, "We all have an interest in this subject." That statement is abundantly true, and it lies behind the consensus that has been evident during the debate.

I declare a personal interest: my mother will be 100 years of age in a few weeks. She is, as one would expect, in long-term care. I should like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the way in which she has been looked after in a private home, which has been fantastic.

I endorse the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable), but it would be wrong not to put on record that the vast majority of people who care for the elderly, be they private owners of care homes or be they their staff, who, as he pointed out, have a difficult job, are trying, in the most difficult circumstances, to look after our elderly in a responsible and skilled way. That is the kernel of the problem, to which I shall return later in the debate.

I want to endorse and reinforce some points that were made earlier. It is a demographic fact that longevity is part of the problem, and that is especially true of Cornwall. Not only do we have a wonderful climate, which is why my mother will soon be 100, but we have many people, some of whom will have retired from the constituencies represented here today to the most beautiful part of the UK. We therefore have a disproportionate number of elderly people who require long-term care in Cornwall. We also have many large properties in coastal and seaside resorts, which is something that applies to other parts of the country, and they have traditionally been seen as appropriate—my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) will agree with this point—for conversion into care homes. That combination of demographic and physical factors has resulted in a concentration of homes that is becoming a problem. The problem is especially acute where local authorities find themselves at a considerable long-term disadvantage, which was a point made by the hon. Member for Sherwood.

The 2 per cent. increase in funding, which nowhere near meets the cost, will, if we are not careful, be year on year. Those who pay privately for care cross-subsidise those who do not. Such people may feel that that is an unfortunate fact of life, but it is creating frustration and resentment, which we can well do without. Those who run private homes are desperately trying to make ends meet, but they are finding it difficult to meet that objection with a logical argument. Neither they nor social services departments have created that situation; it is the result of the Government's funding. However, I shall not rehearse all Cornwall's problems because they are similar to those that were mentioned earlier.

As far as I can see, there are no villains to the piece; they are all victims. Care home owners clearly have a difficult task and most are dedicated to the work that they do. Care homes are not seen by most of their owners as simply a profit-making commercial enterprise. They generally entail a personal commitment. Staff, to whom I have already referred, now find that people with less skill, dedication and commitment than themselves can, as my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome pointed out, stack shelves in a supermarket at a better rate of pay and with fewer difficulties in terms of conditions and responsibilities. Staff are having intolerable pressures put upon them although they are doing a difficult job. Training and career development are important, and it was interesting to hear from the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Hywel Williams), who has obviously been involved with those issues.

We must ensure that there are greater career opportunities for carers. We all know councillors for whom this problem has caused genuine and terrible dilemmas. Finally, and most importantly, there are the residents themselves. For all those people, it is critical that we try to remove the endemic, persistent and consistent uncertainties that have been there for so many years. For everyone concerned, but in particular the vulnerable residents, I hope that we can ensure a degree of certainty during the next couple of years.

I hope that the Minister and her colleagues will look over the border to Scotland to see how our colleagues and her colleagues are working together to achieve a more equitable solution. However, we cannot wait too long.

11.54 am

**Mr. Paul Burstow** (Sutton and Cheam): We have had a good debate and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath) for enabling us to have it. We need to explore the issues that he and other hon. Members have raised and we must put some questions to the Minister.

The message coming from the contributions made today is that we have experienced an extraordinary loss of capacity in the care sector outside hospitals, and that is why we now have problems in hospitals. There has been a lack of understanding of the consequences of a number of policy initiatives over the past five years, if not for longer. On the one hand, there are serious staff shortages with two out of three social services departments reporting staff shortages and many care homes struggling to compete with the supermarket down the road because they cannot afford to pay their

*[Mr. Paul Burstow]*

staff as much. On the other hand, there is a physical shortage of capacity, particularly in the care home sector. My hon. Friend gave the figures on that.

The problems caused by the combination of those two factors have been exacerbated by the new standards that have been introduced. They are welcome but the cost consequences of complying with them have not been followed through. When care home managers examine the standards, they will realise that adjustments must be made to their properties. When they work out the cost of them and see that they will have to have fewer people in their homes with a lower fee income, they will be even less able to repay any loans that they receive to make the changes. Their bank managers would laugh them out of the room, so they will not even go to see their bank managers but will investigate the retail possibilities that might result from closing the home and realising a rental or other income. That is why, in some parts of the country, the issue is not to increase fees to retain capacity, but to encourage people back into the market.

For example, in Kent and Somerset many homes have gone—they have been boarded up and sold. We must recover capacity in those areas or we shall be faced with the prospect of social services departments recruiting overseas, with the prospect of elderly people being exported overseas to be cared for. Increasingly, that is the prospect in Kent and other parts of the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) rightly referred to the concern about the result of those pressures on care for individuals. There is strong evidence of a powerful correlation between low levels of training and abuse in homes. There is much research evidence of that in the United States and equivalent evidence in this country. We must recognise that part of the problem is the insufficient training of staff who are not as skilled as they should be in treating people with dementia. My hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome referred to the difficulties of dealing with people with dementia and to the need to provide appropriate care.

That brings me to the roll-out of the "free nursing care" that started on 1 October and that will have the unwelcome consequences that the Government have not foreseen in setting their objectives for tackling bed blocking. Not only was that policy introduced at breakneck speed—the final guidance was issued on 25 September, which left staff in the NHS three working days in which to implement the final version of the guidance—but not all the documentation was available at that stage.

There is concern that the guidance will create perverse incentives. Those with the highest needs will pay less because the cost of their nursing care will, appropriately, be picked up, while those with the lowest needs will pay most. That may lead places with poor practices that drive up dependency being rewarded because they may receive extra money for nursing care because they do not provide the social and other activities that promote independence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome referred to dementia care. People with dementia do not simply turn up in nursing homes, but the Government's work book for rolling out free nursing care shows that people with dementia could be banded at the high-need level and receive free nursing care worth £110 a week. What will happen if, as surveys have shown, people with an equivalent level of need are in residential care homes? Will they be made to up sticks and move to a nursing home with all the consequences involved, or will the rules be flexible enough to provide free nursing care for people in residential care homes?

Will the bands introduced for free nursing care be uprated annually? If not—we have already heard that self-funders' fees increase by 5 per cent. a year on average—the gap will start to widen again. A greater proportion of care, as well as accommodation costs, will have to be paid for. Will there be an annual uprating, and will it take into account regional variations such as weighting allowances and the cost of regulation? The fact that the regulatory system will continue to move forward and change must also be reflected.

I have a question relating to the roll-out of free nursing care. What is the appeals mechanism? At the moment, it is very unclear what it will consist of, and it would help if the Minister could spell out how people will gain access to it and whether support from independent advocates will see them through the process. Often, we are talking about people who, because of their condition, are the frailest and least able. They need support to be able to get what they are entitled to.

On capacity and free nursing care, a care home owner who runs a small nursing unit and has a number of people banded in the medium care band will need to have a registered nurse in the home all the time. That will cost a substantial extra sum. To cover the cost of one nurse, 20 to 25 residents will need to be in that band and receiving moneys from the NHS. If such an owner has fewer residents in the medium band, how on earth will he be able to pay for his obligation to provide a registered nurse all the time? The Minister needs to clarify how we are to ensure that smaller nursing homes, which will be vital in dealing with bed-blocking issues this winter and beyond, are not suddenly put out of business by an initiative that is well intentioned but perhaps not fully thought through.

The capacity issue brings me to the final set of questions. Last week's announcement of an extra £200 million in a full year is very welcome, but we need to be clear where the funds are coming from. Is the pot of money new, or is it to be taken from the £900 million for intermediate care that has been talked about on numerous occasions? It would be nice to know whether the funds were new or had been taken from contingency reserves or somewhere else.

What is the target in respect of bed blocking? Is it to make available 1,000 beds by the end of the winter, or 1,000 beds a day to the end of winter? The target is unclear and it needs to become a lot clearer, so that it is not missed by the local authorities that are in the frame.

That brings me to the 50 local authorities that have benefited from the special grant that will come their way. It is not merely a question of rewarding the local authorities that are the poorest performers, because much of the money is being targeted on health authorities with trusts that are not delivering. The announcement has triggered a response from care home owners across the country. They are saying, "Isn't it

time that our fees increased—not next year, but now?" They are giving notice to their local authorities that they want their fees to go up now, and that if they do not, they will refuse to continue to take state-funded places. Indeed, that is already happening in York, and is causing great concern as a result.

Let us consider the case of an authority that does not receive the extra cash but neighbours one of the 50 authorities that benefit from it. That authority will see its neighbour jacking up the rates that it is prepared to pay, but it will be unable to pay the same rate. It will no longer be able to afford to place people in the homes in which it used to place them. Suddenly, it will be a bed-blocking local authority. However, because the local authority that receives the money this year will have an on-going commitment to fund the person that it placed in the nursing home, it will ask the Government for the full amount next year. So although the £200 million is welcome, it will be fully committed to this year's expenditures. Any other local authority that wants to do well in future will need extra resources to deal with its capacity problems.

If we do not have the capacity to provide long-term care in Kent, Somerset and the other places that hon. Members have mentioned, the year-round gridlock in our system will continue to get worse. Private investors will not come back into the sector to reopen homes and establish new care facilities. Will the Minister guarantee that long-term investment will be made, and not just year by year by the tap being turned on and off? Local authorities and the private sector need to know that for three, four or five years funding will be provided so that they can invest in guaranteed delivery.

12.4 pm

**Mr. Simon Burns** (West Chelmsford): I welcome the debate. Every speaker has referred to long-term care as being a problem or as being in crisis. Both those propositions are true, partly because of changes in the way in which society and individuals want to provide care for elderly members of their family.

Outdated legislation provides the framework for a policy that has moved on dramatically. I refer, of course, to the National Assistance Act 1948, which laid down the definition of health and social care at a time when there was no emphasis on providing domiciliary care. There were long-stay hospitals where the elderly, with appalling quality of life, were left to languish until they died. That was a national disgrace. Fortunately, in the past 50 years, society has become far more civilised and caring in its provision for elderly people. Community care has developed, which I strongly support, and there is an emphasis, when it is feasible, on domiciliary care that allows the elderly to remain in their own home.

We have also seen the development in private residential homes of a home from home for those elderly who are so frail that they cannot live in their own home. That has created significant problems, partly because, following the 1948 Act, people have been subject to means testing. We may have missed an opportunity to address the funding of residential care when the Government first set up the royal commission on long term care. For many years there has been resentment that people who have been thrifty and put aside money for their old age, and who can no longer live at home and must go into residential care, must be financially responsible for their own care until their assets are reduced to £18,500. Yet, on the other side of the coin, the state pays for care for people who have not been thrifty and made provision for their retirement. In fairness, I should point out that people who have failed to make provision for their retirement have not always spent the money as they went along. It is not always that they have not been thrifty; there are people who were unable to put money aside due to economic or physical circumstances. However, a group of people exists who were not thrifty when they could have been, which causes resentment.

What can one do to ensure that the system works? The policies on which the Conservative party fought the last election offer an alternative positive step forward. First, we propose a voluntary insurance scheme, which will be part of the ethos of the responsibility of the individual. If that ethos were established at the start of people's working lives, the premiums that people had to pay would be so negligible that they would not mind paying the money. It would be a voluntary system whereby they could bypass the means test. When they reached retirement age and needed residential care, they would be able to draw on the insurance policy and protect their assets, which they could then pass on to their children or grandchildren if they wished.

The other alternative is a scheme put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) to create a long-term care fund, into which individuals could put a lump sum. It is estimated that the lump sum, at current prices, would be about £25,000 to £30,000. If people did not need those funds for long-term care—75 per cent. of people in this country do not—the asset could be passed on to their children or grandchildren for their long-term care. Both proposals are worthy of consideration because it is unacceptable that in the lifetime of this Government 160,000 homes have had to be sold by individuals or families to pay for residential care.

I mention briefly the problems of free nursing care, which have been mentioned by many hon. Members. Many people feel betrayed by the Prime Minister's announcement, which was made, typically, before a general election, that from 1 October this year nursing care would be free. In the Committee that considered the Health and Social Care Bill, the official Opposition had an agreement with the Government that we would accept the policy of not changing the rules and regulations on residential care because we supported the provision of free nursing care. We believed that that was the quid pro quo.

We now feel betrayed, as do many organisations and individuals, because we took what the Prime Minister and the Government said at face value. We believed that the Government were sincere about providing free nursing care for all from 1 October. What a sham that has become. It is now apparent that nursing care is not free for all. There is the banding system, and the definition of nursing in small print excludes significant sections of the community that most normal and reasonable individuals would consider to require nursing. For example, people who suffer from dementia and Alzheimer's disease will almost certainly not receive free nursing care because the Government have

*[Mr. Simon Burns]*

categorised their care as personal care. That is a disgrace and a betrayal, and the Government should look again and provide what they promised.

I also draw attention to the problems of the residential home sector. Beds are withdrawn and closed down for a variety of reasons. As many hon. Members have said, there are problems with funding and self-funders pay a 5 per cent. increase in fees each year, whereas local authorities pay less. Local authorities effectively use their position in the market to force contracts on residential care home owners. That is partially because of the severe strain on the social services budget. A number of homes have been put out of business because they cannot afford to continue. Similarly, legislation on the standards of care expected of homes causes a severe problem for existing homes—particularly small homes—and will have an impact on those thinking of building purpose-built homes. I question some of the small print on the size of rooms and other standards that are being demanded, and I urge the Minister to examine that matter. In the light of our experience and of what is expected to happen, will the Government consider whether more common sense and flexibility can be introduced into the system?

Mid-Essex, where my constituency is located, offers a classic example of the kind of situation that must be avoided. The number of beds in the area is shrinking; homes in Chelmsford and the surrounding area are regularly closing down. Ten years ago, there were enough beds to meet the need for residential care, but that is no longer the case. As a result, elderly family members are having to move away from the area to find a home. That causes them grave distress, because they may have spent their entire life in the Chelmsford area, and they may not want to travel 30 or 40 miles to an unfamiliar area. It also puts a strain on relatives, as they have to travel further to visit. In short, it is an unsatisfactory situation that must be addressed.

I will now conclude as time is running out, but I urge the Minister to listen carefully to all the points that have been made across the political divide during this important debate, and to be prepared to think again, rather than simply to tell hon. Members that everything is fine, that the Government are wonderful, and that the rest of us have got it wrong.

12.16 am

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Jacqui Smith)**: I congratulate the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath); the debate has been useful and interesting, and I agree with him that it deals with an important issue. We live in a society in which increasing numbers of people live to an advanced age. One in five of us is over 60. During the next 25 years the number of over-80s will increase by 25 per cent., and the number of over-90s will double. Those figures are to be celebrated; we should take pride in them. I want to take this opportunity to wish a happy birthday in the coming weeks to the mother of the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler). Older people are not a burden on society, and they must not be characterised as such; they are a resource of wisdom and experience.

However, our ageing society creates a new set of challenges so we must modernise the present system of care. I agree with hon. Members that that system can be confusing, unfair and unresponsive to individual needs. The Government have set out to address the matter. As a result of the changes announced last year in the NHS plan, older people can now have greater confidence in the ability of health and social services departments to deliver the services that they want in the quantities that are required and of the right quality.

Several hon. Members have raised concerns about the capacity of the care home sector. I point out to the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome that, although the Government do not underestimate the importance of that matter, the figure of 50,000 in relation to the loss of beds is incorrect. It is also necessary to bear it in mind that although some beds have been closed, others have been created, because some homes have expanded their provision. In 2000, there was a net loss of around 7,700 independent sector places, according to a recent report published by Laing and Buisson, is an expert in that area. It is, however, also interesting that Laing and Buisson reported that

"the continued failure of any really major wave of closures to materialise by the end of 2000 bears witness to the survival power of small businesses in this sector."

That is encouraging, although, as I will explain, the Government are not complacent about the situation in respect of care home capacity.

The reduction in capacity can, as some hon. Members have pointed out, be consistent with a policy of promoting independence. Everyone—including older people—wants to keep people out of institutional care if that is possible, and I note encouraging figures that show that 5 per cent. more households received intensive home care packages in 2000 than in 1999. In Somerset, recent indicators show that more older people have been helped to continue to live at home. However, we must ensure that such a change is planned so that alternative services are available. That is why the Government have already provided significant additional resources for social services and why the further cash injection of £300 million was made for this year and next year, details of which I shall explain later.

As part of the implementation of the NHS plan, local authorities and health authorities are now required to work with local independent sector providers to determine nursing and residential bed requirements and to agree a strategy to remedy shortfalls. The Government are undertaking a study of the supply of residential and nursing homes in England and are examining future requirements, profitability and closures. My predecessor brought together a strategic commissioning group that has examined improvements in commissioning. We need to maintain capacity and encourage diversification and innovation, so that we can provide options for adults who need care and support.

To that end, in line with the £300 million investment, we recently published an agreement with local government, the NHS and independent sector providers of health and social care, and housing services. That agreement, "Building Capacity and Partnership in Care", sets out principles and practices that can be followed at a local level. Acrimonious disputes between councils, which are commissioning and paying for services, and independent providers, particularly of

residential and nursing homes as well as domiciliary services, are not good. The people who suffer are local people who need those services. They are at the centre of our worries today, which is why I can understand the distress caused by care home closures. Better emphasis needs to be placed on commissioning at a local level. We must take a fresh look at how national and local government, the NHS and independent sector care providers can work and plan together to the advantage of the service user. Real collaboration will result in standards rising and better outcomes for services. The agreement that we published last week is intended to help that process.

Hon. Members referred to national minimum care standards. The development of those standards is part of our overall reform to modernise the regulatory system for social services and nursing homes. The hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable) emphasised the need for a coherent and regulatory inspection system. While recognising the need for standards, the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Hopkins) expressed worry about how such standards would be implemented.

The national minimum standards for care homes for older people were published in March. They will promote better quality care and help to stop abuse by grounding practice in the principles of dignity, choice, privacy and respect, which we all agree are important. They will guarantee residents access to an effective complaints procedure and ensure that they are cared for by trustworthy and reliable staff who are properly trained for a difficult and sensitive job. Those standards were consulted on extensively. We listened to the concerns of providers and produced sensible standards that will give providers a reasonable time to adapt and achieve the support of national organisations that represent consumers and providers.

We made several specific changes to the proposed standards in response to the concerns that were raised. I am confident that such decisions will ensure that necessary improvements in the quality of care homes will be achieved smoothly and that stability and sufficient capacity are maintained.

However, it is also important to communicate effectively the reality of what the standards will mean for care homes. Some slightly exaggerated claims have been made in some areas. I take responsibility for ensuring that we communicate with care home owners because, in introducing the standards, we need to maintain high quality and ensure that the good care homes to which hon. Members referred maintain their capacity through the change.

It will be for the National Care Standards Commission to decide in the particular circumstances of each home whether that home conforms to the standards necessary to meet the assessed needs of its residents. The focus of that commission will be to work with providers to help them meet national standards. That is important. Through the process we need to maintain capacity and the good work done in our care homes.

**Richard Younger-Ross** (Teignbridge): Will the Minister give way?

**Jacqui Smith:** No, because I am short of time.

Hon. Members referred to last week's announcement on extra funding for bed blocking. We recognise that more money is needed in the system to make a reality of the right quality of care for older people at the right time and in the right place. That is why the extra £300 million announced last week, which is in addition to the £900 million identified for intermediate care, is aimed at stabilising the care home market, which may mean that local authorities need to reconsider the fees that they offer in partnership with their independent and voluntary sector partners. We aim to attack the bed-blocking problem and ensure that developments take place in the context of improving services for older people, as we set out in the national service framework for older people.

We are focusing £45 million of this year's £100 million on the 50 councils that need greater help. Another £45 million will be distributed to the other 100 councils on the basis of the standard spending assessment, and £10 million will support other initiatives to support and promote change for the good of the users of the system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Paddy Tipping) and the hon. Member for Westbury (Dr. Murrison) expressed anxiety about our decision to target that money. The issue is not fair shares for councils but tackling areas in which users of the service are disproportionately affected by the problems. That is why we focused on areas in which people are suffering the most, and we were right to do that. The conditions surrounding the money that we are allocating to the 50 councils that are receiving the extra help are tight. A target will be agreed for reducing delayed discharges from hospital, and councils will need to take clear steps to improve their partnership working and strategic planning.

As for the £200 million for next year, we have already said that no local authority will receive less than it received this year, but for the reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood gave, we need to keep under review how to promote best practice in the system and ensure that we make the changes that our constituents want.

On 1 October, we delivered on our commitment in the NHS plan to provide free nursing care for all, with £100 million worth of investment this year. From that date, no one need pay for the care of a registered nurse in a nursing home—care that in other settings is already provided free by the NHS. For people who were already receiving nursing care in other residential care settings, it is the continuing responsibility of the NHS to ensure, as before, that that NHS provision is free. We have removed an anomaly by ensuring that care provided by a registered nurse in a nursing home is free, and we are moving away from a means-tested system of nursing care to one that is based on assessed need. Clinical need, rather than income, is the determining factor in deciding the band of nursing care in which people are placed. That will be introduced alongside other measures designed to make the system fairer—a 12-week property disregard, and money for local authorities to introduce a deferred payment scheme.

*[Jacqui Smith]*

In response to points made about Scotland, we should have this debate in the light of reality. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Hywel Williams) suggested that changes had already been made in Scotland; they have not. We have delivered on our commitment to introduce free nursing care in England. Changes are still under discussion in Scotland. It is right in a devolved system—

**Mr. William O'Brien (in the Chair)**: Order. I now call the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Miss Begg).



## Energy Strategy (Scotland)

12.30 pm

**Miss Anne Begg** (Aberdeen, South): I am delighted to be here to discuss the Government's energy strategy review in Scotland, and pleased that I have secured an Adjournment debate on such an important subject.

The subject is huge and could easily fill an hour and a half of debate, but we have only half an hour. It is probably too big for me to do it justice in that time, so I will begin by saying what I will not be talking about, because the energy strategy review has many aspects and there will not be time to cover them all. I do not want anybody to leave the debate thinking that I am not aware of all the issues. For instance, I will not speak about the future role of nuclear power in Scotland, although that is an important issue. Nuclear power stations will soon be nearing the end of their cycle, and decisions will have to be made about what will replace them and whether new stations will be built. That subject would be enough for an Adjournment debate, and may be picked up by another hon. Member. I will not be saying a great deal about electricity generation, transmission or supply, either—the mechanics of how electricity gets into our homes. That, too, is a big issue and is important in any strategy review. Nor will I talk about the future of coal, or about what will happen to the coal communities that are still struggling with difficulties created by the downturn in that industry.

In such a short debate I want to focus my attention, and as I am an Aberdeen MP it will come as no surprise that I will concentrate predominantly on the oil and gas industry, and on the role of Aberdeen. The oil and gas industry will be crucial not only in the energy strategy for Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, but for Aberdeen's economy, which is vibrant thanks to the prosperity created by the industry. It is vital to how the future of Aberdeen develops. Any energy strategy must take into account not only the short-term but the long-term needs of the industry. Aberdeen has an important part to play in the long-term future of energy needs, which will be predominantly concerned with sustainable and renewable energy. My contribution will therefore be made in two parts, examining first the role of oil and gas now and in the near future, and then Aberdeen's role in future energy needs through renewables.

First I will deal with oil and gas. My advice to the Government is: do not write them off. Much has been written in the newspapers recently about the idea that that industry is on a downturn and nearing the end of its life. I remember when I first went to Aberdeen to begin university in the early 1970s and the oil industry had just arrived. At that time the lifespan of the industry was declared to be 10 years and at the most 15—or if we were really lucky it might last for 20 years. We were told to make the best of it, because prosperity would not last. Some 30 years down the line the oil and gas are still flowing. As many reserves on the UK continental shelf in the North sea are known about now as in the mid to late 1970s. There is as much oil for recovery there as there was in the original 1970s projections, even without taking into account the exciting developments west of Shetland.

An exhibition is held biannually in Aberdeen, and the mood at the recent 2001 Offshore Europe exhibition was incredibly upbeat and positive. The elaborateness of the displays showed that the industry was in good heart, and some operators and contractors made spectacular presentations. That is a good barometer indicating that the operators and contractors in the oil industry feel that there is a future in the North sea.

The oil industry is still a major employer in the Scottish economy. Various figures are bandied about concerning the numbers employed. The submission from the Scotland Office to the energy review mentions 100,000 jobs directly or indirectly related to the industry. Those employed directly in the oil and gas industry, however, total 41,000 this year. That is down from the figure for those working in the industry in 1996, which was 46,000. According to the oil and gas prospectus—the 2001 update produced jointly by Aberdeen city council and Aberdeenshire council—total employment in the oil and gas industry is projected to drop to 37,000 in 2011 and to 32,000 in 2016. Fewer people will be working in the industry, but I contend that 32,000 jobs still form a sizeable part of any economy.

The interesting development, however, is in the numbers working offshore. That figure is due to drop even more severely than total employment. This year, about 18,000 people work offshore on the UK continental shelf—down from 21,200 in 1996—and by 2016 the figure is projected to drop to 12,000. Why is the drop in the number of people working offshore worse than that in the oil and gas industry as a whole? It is partly caused by new technologies. As those come in, and as fields mature, fewer people are needed to work on the inhospitable terrain of the North sea oil platforms. In fine weather, working on a platform is very pleasant, but in less fine weather it is a hard job. However, modern platforms are quite luxurious and a lot better than the original ones. I have visited the Miller platform, for which I thank BP. It was an experience like no other in my life. If anyone here has never been offshore, I would advise them to try it.

The number of fields in production is increasing. There were 87 in 1996, and the projection for 2016 is 115. Again, that is all to do with new developments and new technology. There have been improvements in oil recovery, in the North sea in particular. New technology is such that fields that were previously difficult to operate are now in development. We knew that oil and gas were there, but could not get them out until now. The rise in oil prices has made it possible to recover some fields that were in mothballs—if I may use that term. I am wary of mentioning particular operations in case I miss some out, but I was recently at the interesting inauguration of the Franklyn Elgin field by TotalFinaElf. That was a difficult gas field to develop because of the heat and pressure that the gas was under.

When I did my Industry and Parliament Trust with Chevron in 1998, the price of oil was as low as $10 or $12 a barrel. Decisions had to be made about a difficult field, the Clare field, which was a joint venture between Chevron and several other operators, predominant among which was BP. I sat in on the meeting at which they decided not to proceed with that development. It was a sad day because years of work had gone into the project, but the oil price meant that it was unsustainable at the time. I am glad to say that, because of the higher price of oil, the Clare field is now going ahead. Those are just two examples, and they are not the only ones, of how difficult marginal fields can now be exploited.

We now have better recovery of oil and gas. Where fields have been decommissioned or are nearing decommissioning, operators such as Talisman have come in and bought up some of the licences. Such operators are now recovering oil and gas—especially oil—from areas that were thought to be nearing the end of their lifespan. The lifespan of many fields has been extended.

**Mr. Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland): Does the hon. Lady agree that there is a prospect of the industry's provision of jobs in constituencies such as mine having a particularly long tail if we can get into the decommissioning market? If we can bring installations back on shore and decommission them in an environmentally friendly way, that will continue to provide employment. Is it not time that the Scotland Office or the Department of Trade and Industry gave some encouragement to ensure that we are in that market, which should not go to Scandinavian countries alone?

**Miss Begg:** I did not intend to talk about decommissioning, because I want to be optimistic. Many fields that were set for decommissioning have not been decommissioned. Indeed, some small operators that have not yet extracted any oil out of the ground are currently looking to buy up licences that have already been classed as redundant. The oil industry has a long-term future. The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that there will be an issue about who gets the decommissioning work , which we must ensure is done in an environmentally friendly way.

It is important that businesses, operators and contractors in both Aberdeen and the rest of the north-east are part of the oil industry's future. We are already seeing much of the expertise that has been developed in the North sea being exported abroad. Many Aberdeen companies are already operating in a global market. That is the short-term future of the oil industry. However, if Aberdeen is to continue to sustain its economy, it must not only look beyond the oil industry, but consider how it can use its expertise in new energy technologies. There are new imperatives affecting the energy industry, such as environmental pressure, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. Environmental pressures will ensure that we deliver energy in a sustainable way that does not ruin our environment, but it is also important that we have cheap energy. If the oil price continues to rise we may reach a stage where it becomes unsustainable as a fuel because it is both expensive and environmentally unacceptable.

Aberdeen needs to be ready. The Government need to be aware of Aberdeen's expertise, and Aberdeen's companies and businesses operating in the energy market need to prepare for developments. It is important that we start to address these issues now so that we do not miss the boat. There are two reasons why we must consider environmental imperatives. First, we need to make oil and gas cleaner fuels so that they will continue to be used in the future—something that we are beginning to see with the production of liquefied

*[Miss Begg]*

petroleum gas. I am very interested in liquid gas, which a company in my constituency, PCG, is developing with the government of Western Australia. Gas is turned into a liquid that can be used in diesel engines, which will be a cleaner fuel.

However, the aim is not only to make oil and gas cleaner fuels, but to develop renewable energies. Scotland is well placed to investigate the development of renewable energy sources. We have already led the world in the development of hydro-electricity, which has provided more than 10 per cent. of Scotland's energy needs over the past few decades, and our weather and geography lend themselves very well to the development of wave and wind power. I put in a plea on behalf of the technologies that are needed for offshore wind energy, many of which have already been used to develop the offshore oil industry.

I am not saying that Aberdeen should have offshore wind farms along its coast—it is not suitable, because much shallower water is required; nor that wave power is necessarily right on the east coast— it is more likely to be developed on the west coast or in the Moray firth. The role that I envisage for Aberdeen is that of a centre of excellence, knowledge and expertise. We have two universities—the university of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon university—which are already doing exciting development work on all aspects of energy. We have companies that are beginning to look to future development: major operators such as Shell, which is working on offshore wind, and BP, which is working on solar energy. I want that development to happen in Aberdeen, and to ensure that it is not exported abroad. I know that the Danes are far ahead of us in developing offshore wind energy. That is why my plea is for us to get involved now, so that as the oil industry moves onward and outward, and perhaps becomes less sustainable, the expertise in Aberdeen can be put to good use in other areas of energy production.

**Mr. Russell Brown** (Dumfries): Far be it from me to disagree with my hon. Friend and to say that Aberdeen should not be a centre of excellence. I fully support the whole principle of developing renewables; anyone who does not is surely somewhat foolhardy. However, does she not think that while the gas and oil industries have been developing over the past 20 or 30 years, we may have missed the boat in terms of research and development into renewables, and that we should have been concentrating more time and effort on that?

**Miss Begg:** I would love to be able to rewrite history. Perhaps my hon. Friend has a point and we should have been thinking about that sooner, but it is not too late—although it may be soon—provided that we get on the bus now. We should remember that during the industrial revolution Britain appeared to be way ahead of all the other European countries, but Germany introduced the newer technologies while Britain was using the older technologies, and stole a march on us. That may be the case with some renewables—certainly, research has gone down several blind alleys in developing wind and wave power.

Now is the right time to get into renewables and to ensure that the expertise that has been developed over the years in Aberdeen is used. Those brains should be used to look into solutions for renewables. For example, in the development of wind power, it is important to get windmills right in terms of gearing and size, and in using new material that makes them light but strong enough not to break in winds of varying strengths. That is a difficult relationship to get right, and there is work to be done on it. I do not want to suggest that there are just one two areas of possibility; things will be happening in Aberdeen and elsewhere that I have not heard about and cannot dream of, but which are none the less very important.

My message to the Government on the energy strategy is that the future of Aberdeen and the north-east could be bright. To the doom and gloom merchants who say that it will all end in tears and the oil will soon run out, my answer is no, it still has some time to go—and even when it does run out we will be well poised to create a sustainable economy through diversification into other energy sectors.

I want Aberdeen to change from the oil capital of Europe into the energy capital of Europe. With Government support, the help of the various operators and the expertise that we have in Aberdeen, I am sure that we can achieve that.

12.50 pm

**The Minister of State, Scotland Office (Mr. George Foulkes):** I sincerely congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Miss Begg) on securing a debate on a very important topic. I agree that it deserves more than half an hour, and I hope that we will find other opportunities to debate it.

I visited Aberdeen during the general election campaign, and I enjoyed my visit. I said then that my hon. Friend is one of the best constituency Members in the House of Commons. Fortunately, the electorate of Aberdeen, South recognised that, and she has demonstrated it again today. The way to represent one's constituents is to secure a debate and argue one's case forcefully, as my hon. Friend did, rather than tabling 250 questions for written answer. Such round robins, costing £30,000, are a waste of public money. One such question asked how many photographers the Scotland Office has spent money on, and the cost in real terms since 1995. That is the kind of rubbish that we get from the immature representatives of the Scottish National party. I wish that they would take a leaf out of the book of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South, who is a really good representative of her constituents.

As my hon. Friend knows, the United Kingdom Government remain responsible for the entire area of reserved issues, of which energy is one. Although energy is reserved to this Parliament, we all recognise that it impinges on a number of devolved responsibilities, not least the energy sector's significance in relation to jobs, as my hon. Friend said. As we pointed out in our submission to the review, there are 100,000 oil-related jobs in Scotland, and three of Scotland's top 10 companies are electricity generators and suppliers. That shows the importance of the sector in Scotland. Although energy policy is reserved, environmental issues are devolved, as are the promotion of renewable energy, energy efficiency, consents for new power stations, overhead lines and gas pipelines. That is why we in the Scotland Office have been working very closely with our colleagues in the Scottish Executive—officials and Ministers—on the entire energy review.

The energy review is an important part of the Government's energy strategy. Some journalists have said that we are conducting the review in secret. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, all the submissions and minutes of meetings held so far are published on the web. We cannot be more open than that. Everyone can read about exactly what we are doing and the way we are doing it. We have had more than 400 substantive submissions and a couple of hundred insubstantial ones, including one from the SNP that did not say anything new. I had better not go on, as I might be accused of being a "Nat-basher"—[*Interruption.*] Ah, it worked.

**Mr. Michael Weir** (Angus): Speaking as one of the alleged immature representatives, I ask the Minister to deal with the issue and explain the Government's thoughts, particularly on renewable energy, and the way forward. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South gave a very good speech on the oil industry, which I am interested in as it affects my constituency too. However, we must look beyond that to renewables. What are the Government's proposals for renewable energy? Do they intend to go down the nuclear road, as has recently been suggested?

**Mr. Foulkes:** I am happy to reply to that—a reply that will cost absolutely nothing. I share the vision that my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South set out, in which we build on the oil and gas industry. Aberdeen is recognised as the oil capital of Europe. In the light of the expertise, technology and skills of those in and around Aberdeen, including Robert Gordon and Aberdeen universities, we can see the potential that my hon. Friend describes for Aberdeen to become the energy capital of Europe, including renewables.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Mr. Brown) asked my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South whether we had missed the renewables bus. That was the case until just over four years ago, but we saw the bus and got on it quickly. Matters have moved dramatically since then.

Renewables are vital and the Scottish oil and gas industry has much to be proud of. Aberdeen and Scotland as a whole have concentrated on people's skills and made a major contribution to the British economy. That is why PILOT was set up—it was formerly the oil and gas industry taskforce—of which I am a member, as well as being a member of the energy review. The vision of that taskforce is the United Kingdom oil and gas industry and Government working in partnership to deliver quicker, smarter and sustainable energy solutions for the new century. A number of taskforces have been set up within PILOT to help to achieve that vision. One is the oil and gas industry fabrication support group, which has identified significant opportunities for new businesses through diversification, one being energy from renewable sources. The skills of the oil and gas industry are being used to move into renewables, particularly onshore wind. I have seen Scottish Power's wonderful new development at New Cumnock in my constituency. The factory at Campbeltown will build the wind generators to which my hon. Friend referred and provide much-needed jobs. The development includes onshore wind, offshore wind and tidal stream turbines. I made a fascinating visit to Islay and saw one of the pilot schemes for wave generation, which provides the opportunity for large-scale development. Scotland is reported to contain 23 per cent. of the wind energy of Europe and it feels like it from time to time, especially in Orkney and Shetland which I visited recently.

**Mr. Carmichael:** As the Member representing Orkney, may I invite the Minister to return to Stromness in the near future to see for himself the excellent work that is being done at the marine energy test centre, which has been established there as a result of Scottish Executive and Highlands and Islands Enterprise initiatives?

**Mr. Foulkes:** Of course, I shall take up that offer. I welcome the chance to visit Orkney and Shetland, which are my only overseas visits since I changed my job.

Scotland, with its large natural assets, is favourably placed to make faster progress on renewables. We are already seeing progress, the obvious example being AMEC Border Wind. AMEC is one of the first oil and gas contractors to diversify into wind energy in response to the Government's target on renewables. The renewables obligation has made a substantial difference to the development of renewables with £800 million going to the renewables industry through the renewables obligation. That is a substantial contribution.

Another example is Agip (UK), which provides backing for Wavegen, whose generator I saw in Islay. We are keen to encourage further development along those lines. However, we face a number of challenges in the energy review. I do not have time to go into them all today, but I would welcome an opportunity to discuss the matter in more detail. We must focus on the tensions between energy policy and environmental objectives, which is a classic dilemma.

The future role of nuclear energy must be discussed because 45 per cent. of electricity in Scotland comes from nuclear generation. The two nuclear power stations have a finite life and we must work out how they will be replaced. We must all face up to that, including the nationalists, or the lights will go out all over Scotland and the United Kingdom and our constituents would not thank us for that. We need to achieve security and diversity of energy supply. We need to look at the future of the oil and gas sector, and the ways in which we can encourage the opening up of a marginal field. We need to look at the significance of transport as an energy consumer, and the need to tackle fuel poverty. That is something that, in terms of our poverty eradication agenda, we must not forget.

That is the purpose of the energy review. A meeting will take place tomorrow, which I shall attend, and we aim to report by the end of the year. I hope that all hon. Members present will find another opportunity to debate this matter, which is vital to Scotland and to Britain.

## Lauren Wright

1 pm

**Mr. Bill O'Brien (in the Chair):** I now call the right hon. Member for South-West Norfolk (Mrs. Shephard). May I say how sorry hon. Members are to see that her leg is in plaster. We hope that it is not too serious, and that she soon recovers her former health.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard** (South-West Norfolk): Thank you, Mr. O'Brien, for your kind good wishes. All I can say is that just walking along and breaking one's leg is no fun at all. *[Interruption.]* As the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Dr. Gibson) says, it would have been better with a gin and tonic.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the case of Lauren Wright in this Chamber. In more than 30 years of experience in health, education and social services I have known no more appalling case than hers. This tragic child was let down by all those who should have cared for her. Despite warnings from people in the community, Lauren died by slow degrees, in full view of the agencies responsible for her care. We deserve to be told why, and that is why I am calling for a full public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding her death. I am supported today by the hon. Members for Norwich, North and for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb). The Minister will therefore readily understand that this is an all-party approach. I am also supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Simpson), who would have been here but has something wrong with his mouth—we people from Norfolk have some unfortunate afflictions at the moment, one way and another—and by my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Norfolk (Mr. Bellingham).

I shall give a brief and rapid outline of the facts. Lauren Wright was born on 16 July 1993; she died from a blow to the abdomen, with extreme bruising all over her body, on 6 May 2000, two days before the date of the case conference finally organised by Norfolk social services to discuss her plight. From her birth, she was known to Hertfordshire social services, and she became known to Norfolk social services from 31 July 1997. Her name was removed from the Hertfordshire child protection register in August 1998, after a residence order was granted to her paternal grandmother in Norfolk. In January 1999, Lauren began school at the William Marshall primary school in Welney. During 1999, her care was transferred to her father, Craig Wright, who married Tracey Wright in the summer of that year. Lauren then moved to live with her father and stepmother, next door to her paternal grandmother. Tracey Wright was employed as a supervisory assistant at the William Marshall primary school from April 1999. Her responsibilities included supervision of children's play at lunchtime.

Towards the end of 1999 there were reports of bruising to Lauren. On 30 November 1999 she was seen by a consultant community paediatrician. Further anonymous allegations from the community of neglect and emotional abuse of Lauren by her stepmother were made during the early part of 2000. Claims from the family that Lauren was being bullied at school resulted in her teachers being asked by social workers to monitor the situation. She was seen by a general practitioner at Upwell on 14 March 2000, and on 15 March by a paediatrician at the King's Lynn hospital. Both observed numerous bruises of differing ages on her body. The GP suspected abuse, and the paediatrician put them down to bullying at school. Police following up the case were told that the medical evidence was inconclusive.

Hertfordshire social workers visited Lauren at home on 25 April, and the next day they alerted Norfolk social services to their concerns about Lauren's appearance and behaviour. Between 2 and 5 May, she was dealt a fatal blow to the stomach. She died on 6 May. Her stepmother and her father were convicted of her manslaughter and her wilful neglect at Norwich Crown court on 2 October 2001.

That bare recital of the facts, appalling as it is, conceals the real concerns about this case, which are that Lauren's treatment by her stepmother took place in public, observed by the local community and under the gaze of doctors, teachers and social workers. Trial evidence revealed that Tracey Wright was seen hitting the child and screaming abuse at her; that she fed her pepper sandwiches and put bugs from the garden in her food; that the taps in the house were turned off so tightly that the child could not get a drink of water; that she was made to carry the schoolbags of her step-siblings; that she was taunted and tormented by her stepmother in the local shop, and was made to stand for hours fully dressed in front of a hot stove. Her class teacher, in evidence at the trial, said that she saw marks on Lauren

"lots of times, often she was covered with lots of small bruises and with major bruises about once a month. These included black eyes, bruising on her face and scratches across her back."

At the time of her death at the age of six, Lauren weighed little more than two stone. In the words of her head teacher, her physical deterioration had been

"apparent for at least five months before she died."

There can be no doubt that in Tracey Wright, the stepmother convicted of manslaughter, the agencies were dealing with an exceptionally evil woman. Martin Wright, the acting chief superintendent, said:

"I think that any human being who can inflict this kind of treatment on a defenceless child must notch up very near the top of the scale of inhumanity"—

and that is a comment from a policeman.

Tracey Wright was clearly also incredibly plausible. She apparently had an IQ of 78, but nevertheless deceived doctors, teachers and social workers. As Mrs. Cooper of Easton, near Norwich, in a letter to me dated 2 October said:

"Little Lauren went from six stone to just over two, her hair was falling out, she was of a shabby appearance, she seemed sad, not to mention all the different horrific bruising she endured. However plausible and deceitful Tracey Wright was, you just don't keep accepting excuses when a child is constantly and clearly suffering like Lauren. This was going on for sixteen months, not just a one off occurrence, what more evidence did they need?"

After Lauren's death, Norfolk social services department asked the area child protection committee to review its procedures. That department is already the subject of a critical child care inspection report, carried out in 2000. Lauren's death is the fourth in as many years of a child under the protection of Norfolk social services. The ACPC report reveals some of the failures

in Lauren's case, including failure to follow up action and no action at all being taken following reports from the public of abuse. As David Wright, the director of social services, in a letter to me of 29 August said:

"There were failings in other agencies, but I believe that our Department should have been able to intervene to save her."

Mr. Wright has been candid about the shortcomings of his own department. We are not to know if any disciplinary action is to follow this appalling affair, but it is clear that there is a shortage of resources for Norfolk social services—although I shall not major on that point. Mr. Wright describes the position thus:

"Our thin blue line of child protection workers feels stretched close to transparency."

He points out the contrast between Norfoik funding which, on paper anyway, allocates to services for children under 18 something like £117 per head, while for Westminster the allocation is £577 per head—five times the amount that Norfolk is adjudged to need. That, although it is a point, is not the main point that I want to make.

The trial following the death of Lauren Wright convicted her stepmother and father of manslaughter and wilful neglect, but its purpose was not to examine the roles of the public services involved. Those public services are accountable not only to all of us but to the 750 other vulnerable children in Norfolk. That is why I seek a public inquiry into the series of muddles, blind eyes, missed chances, errors and sloppy professional practice revealed by Lauren's death.

The Minister, whom I am glad to see here, will want to explain how Department of Health officials could have rejected my call for an inquiry before it reached her desk. She may even care to dissociate herself from their chilling words. I quote from *The Times* of 2 October:

"It would not be appropriate to hold a public inquiry into all the child killings that happen each year."

My plea is supported by nigh on 1,000 readers of the *Fenland Citizen*, a local newspaper, who have taken the trouble to petition the paper to indicate their support, and by the 98 per cent. of the Norwich-based *Evening News* readers who, in a telephone poll, demanded a public inquiry. That has been the unanimous message from the countless letters, telephone calls and e-mails that I have received from members of the public. I am delighted to see that my hon. Friend the Member for North-West Norfolk, who supports me, is here, and there is strong cross-party support for a public inquiry.

The following questions are among those that must be answered. What was the role of Hertfordshire social services department in the affair? Did it make its Norfolk colleagues aware of its concerns for Lauren? Why did it visit Lauren in April 2000? If it had not, would Norfolk social services have remained unaware of Lauren's plight? Did the head and class teacher at the William Marshall school in Welney follow Norfolk's child protection procedures that were in force at the time of Lauren's death? Those procedures require teachers to report to the education welfare service, among other things that might indicate the abuse of a child:

"listlessness, poor physical growth, weight loss, looking very tired, bruising or lacerations."

I do not know whether the teachers did what their own authority required. Press reports indicate that they expressed their concerns only to Tracey Wright. Did they, or did they not, follow the local education authority's procedures? If they did not, what action will the LEA take, and did they really not do that because neither of the two teachers was a designated teacher? The school has only 30 pupils, for heaven's sake; there is the head and there is the teacher. One of the excuses for taking no action is that at the time there was no designated teacher concerned with non-accidental injury to children. That is the most extraordinary excuse that I have ever heard. What was the role of the head teacher? If there was not a designated teacher, was the head teacher able to say, "There isn't a designated teacher, so it's nothing to do with me." We do not know. How long was the school without a designated teacher, and what did the LEA do about that problem? When was Tracey Wright dismissed from her post at the school? On the day that she was found guilty of manslaughter? I suspect so.

What action was taken by the paediatrician who saw Lauren Wright on 30 November 1999, fully five months before she died? Was it his advice that "reassured" social services so that it took no action at that stage, which self-evidently was a time when Lauren could have been saved? On 14 and 15 March 2000, when Lauren was seen by a general practitioner and then a paediatrician, did they discuss their differing interpretations of the bruising on her body? What contact did the paediatrician have with the school to support his assertion that the bruising had been caused by bullying at school? Lauren could, even at that stage, have been saved. I put those questions to the Norfolk health authority. It replied that it was not

"able to supply information that is not currently in the public domain."

However, there have been developments. Last night, the chairman of the Norfolk health authority, Mr. John Alston, contacted me. He told me that the letter from the health authority to me, dated 12 October 2001, was neither factually correct—that was not the word that he used, but we are in Parliament now—nor complete. He said that the original version of the letter, which I have not seen, but which is being faxed to my home this morning, had been reduced and altered by the regional press officer to the version that I was given. What sort of operation is this? Obviously, I will pursue the matter—I am not majoring on that this morning either, because the Minister has not been warned and clearly cannot know the answer. However, she will hear from me, especially when I receive the original version of the letter. This does, however, support my demand for a public inquiry. How can we trust the health service if it cannot even give a Member of Parliament a factually correct and complete set of answers to a number of questions?

Norfolk social services has rightly shouldered much of the blame for the case, but its professionals are not the only ones involved, nor is it the only local authority concerned. People from all over the United Kingdom have contacted me to express their disgust at the circumstances of Lauren's death, with its revelations of failure of professional judgment and liaison. They, and we, are not prepared to be fobbed off with promises of internal NHS agency inquiries, in which the conduct of the doctors concerned will be examined by other doctors. Nor will we be fobbed off with attempts to bolt this case on to another appalling case, that of Victoria

*[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]*

Climbie. We are sick and tired of hearing about procedures, strategies, reports and restructuring. In the name of the thousands of vulnerable children at risk across Britain, the Minister should today demonstrate her concern by announcing an immediate public inquiry into the case of tragic Lauren Wright.

1.16 pm

**Dr. Ian Gibson** (Norwich, North): I congratulate the right hon. Member for South-West Norfolk (Mrs. Shephard) on securing this debate and on her tenacity in pursuing an appalling case. It is a special case in that it is the fifth in Norfolk in the past few years. The public in Norfolk have a crisis of confidence in social services and their delivery on such issues. That will have to be addressed by an open and transparent public inquiry. There is a lot to be said and there should be no attempt to hide what went on in this tragic case. Unless there is a public inquiry, confidence in Norfolk will erode. Such a case must never ever happen again—and if we do not get it right, there will be another such case.

I am not going to blame individuals. A failure in the development of services has been admitted to. If we are to achieve the change that we need in the way in which such situations are addressed, only an inquiry will bring out all the issues in an open and transparent way and ensure that the public acquire the confidence that is sadly lacking.

I would like the inquiry not to be secret. It is possible to have an inquiry whose chair decides to open only a specific aspect to the public. That would increase suspicion. The whole inquiry will have to be open, because the case has touched the people of Norfolk so deeply. The morale of those who work for social services must be at rock bottom, too. There is a resource requirement to be examined. The way in which we treat our children, viewing them as possessions about whom no one can ask questions, is a general problem in society, which such an inquiry would illustrate.

I give my full support to the right hon. Lady in her demand for a public inquiry. I hope that the Minister will listen and ensure that there is one. The case is a special one, against the background of a county struggling with such issues. Comparisons with anywhere else are not valid at this stage. Will the Minister ensure that the debate is opened up? We must see to it that this never happens again in Norfolk in our time.

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) *rose—*

**Mr. Bill O'Brien (in the Chair)**: I shall call the hon. Gentleman, but we do want to hear the Minister's answers to the questions that have been put. That is important.

1.18 pm

**Norman Lamb:** I understand that. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate, and will keep my remarks brief.

The revelation that we have heard today concerning the apparent doctoring of a letter from the health authority is of enormous concern. It smacks to me of a spin too far, and of a cover-up, which strengthens the case for a full and proper public inquiry. For an information officer of a public body to conceal information is contrary to the whole public service ethos and ethic. I share the view of the right hon. Member for South-West Norfolk (Mrs. Shephard) that it is extraordinary that the officials in the Department of Health rejected calls for a public inquiry within hours of the verdict, without first hearing the case for one.

A public inquiry should consider two specific issues. It is important that we do not demonise social services or social workers. The thrust of an inquiry must be to avoid future tragedies. We must also examine the impact of staffing on the service, and the protection that it can provide with current staffing levels. We must confront that critical issue. We need to look at the co-ordination between agencies and different social services departments. I understand that issues of confidentiality and the requirements of data protection legislation may be preventing the necessary sharing of information. The use of information technology should give those who need to know access to information that can help inform judgment. An inquiry should consider whether data protection rules place impediments in the way of sharing information and investigating facts. For those reasons, I fully support the cause of the right hon. Lady and I urge the Government to avoid further delay in calling a public inquiry.

**Mr. Bill O'Brien (in the Chair)**: I call the Minister.

**Mr. Henry Bellingham (North-West Norfolk)** *rose—*

**Mr. Bill O'Brien (in the Chair)**: We must give the Minister a chance to respond.

**Mr. Bellingham:** I simply want to say that, as a neighbouring MP, I wholly support my right hon. Friend the Member for South-West Norfolk (Mrs Shephard).

1.21 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ms Hazel Blears)**: Thank you, Mr. O'Brien. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for South-West Norfolk (Mrs. Shephard), and I acknowledge the widespread support from people in all parties for the points that she has made. The death of any child is desperately sad, but the death of a child through abuse or neglect is tragic. We know that at least one child each week dies as a result of abuse or neglect. That figure is horrifying. We must all share the responsibility of trying to protect children from abuse and neglect; it is a monumental task. Home Office research indicates that more than 100,000 adults in the UK have convictions for offences against children.

All agencies, and all people with child protection responsibilities, have to work together. As hon. Members have outlined, health, education, social services and other agencies make a complex jigsaw, the role of which is to ensure that concerns are picked up. We are all too aware of the tragedies that can unfold when vital information is not shared between different agencies.

Lauren's death should not have happened. Social services have made a public acknowledgement that had the procedures been followed, the matter would have

been noticed, action would have been taken, and Lauren's death would have been avoided. However, I want to make it clear that Lauren was not killed by social workers or health workers. Lauren was killed by those who should have been caring for her—people who should have safeguarded, nurtured and cherished her. Mistakes were clearly made in the inter-agency handling of the case, but we must not place the responsibility for her death solely at the door of the statutory agencies.

There is always publicity when things go wrong in child protection cases because of the nature of the issues, but too often little is said about the excellent work carried out by social services and other agencies across the country to protect hundreds of thousands of children from harm. Some 160,000 children are referred to social services every year. Nearly 30,000 are added to the child protection register each year, and the vast majority of those children will have better lives because once they are registered the authorities can intervene and be effective. It would be very wrong to think that all children are being failed by our child protection system, but when things go wrong, we have a vital responsibility to find out why.

The "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance states that when factors of abuse or neglect are known or suspected to be a factor in a death, local agencies should get together to consider whether lessons can be learned from the terrible incident. When a child dies in such circumstances, the area child protection committee should always conduct a review, the purpose of which is to identify the lessons to be learned and to set out steps about how they will be acted upon, what is expected to change as a consequence, and how inter-agency operations can be improved. A serious case review of the circumstances leading up to Lauren's death has been undertaken. A summary of that review was published on 5 October, and there is an action plan to take forward all its recommendations.

Norfolk social services department is already under close regional monitoring as a result of a report into children's services in 2000. The Department of Health social services inspectorate will continue to monitor the implementation of that specific action plan by the social services department. The area child protection committee will take local responsibility for the implementation of those plans. There will be a follow-up inspection by the social services inspectorate, which is planned for January. It will assess the safety of all procedures in Norfolk and, crucially, how the recommendations are being implemented. A social services inspectorate and Audit Commission joint review are scheduled for March 2002, which will again closely monitor the situation.

I understand Members' desire for a public inquiry into Lauren's death. We must be satisfied that the lessons learned from the serious case review and the action plan are being learned in Norfolk. There are several specific matters that the action plan promotes in terms of training, assessment frameworks and an integrated electronic recording system. One big issue in the case concerned the series of notes written by GPs and other professionals involved. There was no way in which those notes could have been brought together. With consent, an electronic system can help to ensure that those notes are immediately available and that we have protocols about data sharing, which is an important issue.

All primary care trusts have a named doctor and a nurse for child protection. We must ensure that they take their responsibilities seriously. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Dr. Gibson) that we are all responsible in that regard. Simply designating somebody to take on that responsibility does not remove it from everybody else involved in the system.

The question has been raised of having a public inquiry into this particular incident. There is obviously an on-going public inquiry into the case of Victoria Climbie. It is important to explain why the decision was taken to have a public inquiry in that case, but not in that of Lauren Wright. It is the first statutory inquiry into the death of a child for more than 20 years; there is not a public inquiry into each incident. The major reason why there has been an inquiry into the Victoria Climbie case concerns the complexity of the system, which involved approximately nine different statutory agencies. We want to ensure that we learn the lessons from that inquiry, and how they can impact on incidents such as the one that we have discussed today. We shall ensure that the issues raised by the Climbie case are taken into account in Norfolk. We already have a wide-ranging inquiry in operation and we do not want to duplicate the issues that will arise from it.

Another key reason why a public inquiry will not take place in the case of Lauren Wright is that there will be an external independent review covering the health services aspects of the case, which concern the King's Lynn and Wisbech trust, the West Norfolk primary care trust and the Fenland primary care trust.

**Mrs. Shephard:** Will that review be conducted by doctors?

**Ms Blears:** It will be conducted by the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Paediatricians. It will be external and independent, and people who have not been involved in the case will conduct it. It is expected that the review will cover competence and confidence, communication and transfer of information, and the policies and procedures within each trust. The action plan that has been produced provides a positive way forward for dealing with the specific issues concerning child protection in the Norfolk area. I take the point that there are other cases that underline Members' concerns about issues in that area.

The best way to safeguard children in Norfolk is to ensure that we implement the recommendations in the action plan. We must monitor that process and ensure that those steps are being taken. In future, there must be proper co-ordination across all agencies because, as has been said, if the procedures had been followed in this case, Lauren need not have died. Later, we can learn the lessons of the Victoria Climbie inquiry to try to make sure that we safeguard children wherever they may be. We are taking steps to ensure that we protect children in this community as far as we possibly can. The scale of the problem is immense, but we must ensure that the action plan is implemented in Norfolk, as well as elsewhere in the country. Lauren's death need not—and indeed, must not—have been in vain.

## Consumer Credit

1.29 pm

**Mr. Barry Gardiner** (Brent, North): In securing this debate, my original intention was to examine the words of a young Back Bencher who, in 1987, was discussing that part of the consumer credit industry referred to as "sub-prime". He said:

"I think you need some measure of control and regulation to ensure that the unscrupulous aren't lending to the desperate when there's no possibility of repayment."

The young Back Bencher in question is now the Prime Minister.

I planned to examine today what effect the intervening years have had on the consumer credit industry. I wanted to look at current Government proposals, such as the task force on overindebtedness, and to discuss with the Minister ways in which consumer credit legislation could be updated. However, a particular aspect of the consumer credit industry has come to the fore during my investigations of the past 24 hours, and it is that aspect that I now want to raise with the Minister. She and I therefore share a common dilemma in that both of us may have to tear up our prepared speeches. I trust that she will be able to go with the flow of today's discussion.

On Friday 28 November 1997, before His Honour Judge Rubery at Stoke-on-Trent county court, the case of City Mortgage Corporation *v.* Riley was concluded. Given the Minister's previous role in the Government, she will be familiar with City Mortgage Corporation and many other financial corporations that I will talk about today. It must be said that CMC is not a company with a good track record in the industry. This was a typical case, like many that CMC had taken to court, involving repossession of a family's property. Of course, the mortgage had been secured on the property, but I am pleased to say that the judgment was not as CMC might have expected.

CMC argued that, although an equitable interest had been transferred to an American-based company called Greenwich International Ltd., CMC none the less had the right to enforce the debt. I am pleased to say that the court found otherwise. Mrs. Riley had done quite a bit of background work, and discovered documentary evidence showing that the legal interest, as well as the equitable interest, had been transferred to Greenwich International. The charge by CMC had never been registered because the Rileys' mortgaged property was not registered land. In accordance with section 114 of the Law of Property Act 1925, the deeds operate to transfer all rights to sue on the security to Greenwich International in America, rather than City Mortgage Corporation.

The long and the short of it is that, having pursued this debt, City Mortgage Corporation was found unable to do so by the courts because it had no legal standing, and costs were awarded against CMC. Before dealing with the significance of this case, I must tie it in with a second case that was heard at Basingstoke county court on 21 March last year, over which His Honour Judge Anthony Thompson QC was presiding. The case was that of Rozak *v.* Capital Credit Ltd. I know that the Minister will be familiar with the name of Capital Credit.

Judge Thompson's summation outlined the following. The proceedings had been commenced in February 1998, at which stage it was a mortgage possession action brought by the then claimants, City Mortgage Corporation—hon. Members will see that a link is already beginning to develop—against Mr. and Mrs. Rozak in respect of their property. That claim was settled and the Rozaks lost their property. However, the case that Judge Thompson was dealing with was a claim by the Rozaks against Capital Credit Ltd.

The background is that Mr. and Mrs. Rozak lived at their home for about 20 years prior to its repossession. It was a council house that they were eventually able to purchase under the Government's right-to-buy scheme. They bought the property with the aid of a mortgage of £29,000 from the Nationwide building society. Problems set in for the Rozaks in 1992, when Mrs. Rozak lost her job as a result of industrial injury, and arrears began to accrue on the property. Judgments were made against them in the county court. I stress that at all stages the Nationwide building society acted absolutely properly in this case.

By 1997, the situation had become quite serious and the Rozaks were on the point of having legal action taken against them by the Nationwide. During a further visit from the building society, the seriousness of their financial position and the arrears that had fallen due were made clear to them.

In effect, the Rozaks needed to borrow £7,500, but they did not know where they were going to get it from. At that time they saw in the *News of the World* an offer of loans and finance placed by Capital Credit Ltd., which said that they had a chance to

"clear all your debts with cash to spare on low monthly payments".

Sums from £3,000 to £250,000 could be agreed. It was a tempting offer, which the Rozaks could not refuse, so they got in touch with Capital Credit. Capital Credit told them that because of their bad credit history it would not be able to give them the loan. However, it then offered them the opportunity to have someone come and talk to them about the possibility of a different loan, and sent a broker to meet them for that purpose.

At the meeting, the Rozaks were completely duped. They had wanted a loan of £7,500, but they were induced to remortgage entirely; instead of paying off their loan to the Nationwide, the new broker put them into an agreement with the City Mortgage Corporation. That loan was for a figure of some £47,000—a sum that at the increased rates of interest due on the mortgage, the Rozaks had no possible way of repaying.

What the Rozaks did not know was that the broker was a tied broker, and that they had entered into an agreement with City Mortgage Corporation with the original broker from Capital Credit. That agreement—I have a copy here, and will be happy to make it available to the Minister—was dated 21 December 1995 and was between City Mortgage Corporation Ltd., Capital Credit Ltd. and a certain Mr. Anthony Murtagh. It is a commission agreement. The court rightly looked at the agreement and the ruling by Judge Thompson explained that the broker was legally obliged to act on behalf of the Rozaks, but had not done so.

It was clear from the right of first refusal in the agreement that Capital Credit acted as agents of the party whom they introduced—City Mortgage Corporation—rather than the Rozaks, and that although they owed that fiduciary duty to the Rozaks, they had in fact received secret commissions under the terms of the agreement. The court found that those commissions should be repaid, and that sum, plus costs, was made over to the Rozaks. However, to receive approximately £9,000 after losing the family home was a severe and bitter blow. It did not seem like compensation, because CMC had already obtained the Rozaks' home under a previous court judgment and sold it at a vast profit.

It is clear that secret commissions are a feature of the sub-prime lending market. Most mortgage lenders pay a fee to brokers for introducing a borrower; that is standard practice throughout the industry. The fee paid by a high-street lender for a standard domestic mortgage would probably be around £250. However, a non-status lender in the sub-prime market, which specialises in lending to people with poor credit ratings, often pays brokers a much higher introductory commission of up to 10 per cent. of the loan. That creates a clear conflict of interest between broker and client. If the broker persuades a prime lender to grant a £50,000 loan, the client receives an inexpensive loan, but the broker receives only around £250. If the broker places the client with a non-status lender or sub-prime lender, the broker may pocket up to £3,000, which is a common figure for brokers in the sub-prime market to expect as commission. In the Rozaks' case there was not only £3,000 up-front commission, but additional secret commission which took the figure up to about £8,000. The rule of thumb is that the worse the mortgage, the higher the commission paid to the broker.

Some mortgage brokers place themselves in a particularly difficult position, as did Capital Credit, because they take commission from both sides. Capital Credit took the up-front commission of £3,000 but also received a finder's fee from the lender, or a first refusal commission, as the agreement to which I referred explains. Under civil law, a bribe is the payment of secret commission, which only means that, first, the person making the payment makes it to the agent of the other person with whom he is dealing; secondly, he makes it to that person knowing that that person is acting as the agent of the other person with whom he is dealing; thirdly, he fails to disclose to that other person with whom he is dealing that he has made the payment to the person whom he knows to be the other person's agent. If a lender gives money to a broker and does not tell the borrower that he is doing so, no matter what the intention, it is a bribe under the law. It is not necessary to establish a corrupt motive, nor does the principal have to show that the agent was influenced by the bribe.

The judge concluded by stating:

"there is no doubt that the defendants (Capital Credit) were tied brokers and had to offer, pursuant to the 'first refusal' agreement, all transactions primarily to CMC. It is also clear that there was a secret commission which was by the very nature of the first refusal agreement kept confidential and which was paid to the defendants by City Mortgage Corporation apparently on 1 May 1997 in respect of this transaction... At the end of the day what this comes to is this, here was a secret commission and on the basis of the authorities to which I have referred I am satisfied that in those circumstances Mr. and Mrs. Rozak are entitled either to recover damages or at their election to recover the commissions which were paid."

The Rozaks did that, but it was not adequate compensation for having been duped into remortgaging, for not being able to pay off their original small debt to Nationwide, and for subsequently finding that their home was repossessed.

I started my speech by referring to the other case, in which it became clear that parties who had no right to repossess a home were doing so. That is the situation with regard to much of the sub-prime market. The Land Registry should record a charge against a property, as under the Companies Act—section 395, which is about the first charge form—only where the parties seeking to record such an interest have proved that they are creditors with all the rights, responsibilities and duties pursuant under the definition of a creditor under the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

At the moment, it is possible for someone to register a charge against a property even though they are not the legal owner of the loan against that property. The original case that Judge Rubery ruled on sets that out clearly. Unfortunately, the Land Registry does not make that clear, so most people in the sub-prime market have a charge against their property recorded by someone who is not the legal owner of the loan.

The case of City Mortgage Corporation offers a very good example of how that has been done. The company collapsed in 1997 as a result of a class action brought against the parent company, which was called Cityscape. The action was brought by the shareholders as they had, in effect, been lied to about how United Kingdom loans had been securitised. An out-of-court settlement was agreed with those shareholders, which was worth many millions of dollars. After City Mortgage Corporation collapsed, a company called Ocwen US began to collect the UK loans. Borrowers thought that Ocwen US owned the loans, but it did not. Ocwen US then set up a company called Ocwen UK, which sought to buy out the loans from Cityscape. There was a falling out over that, and in 1998, when the Office of Fair Trading issued guidelines to stop dual interest rates, Ocwen UK announced a mortgage holiday. That marked one of the substantial successes of the Office of Fair Trading at that time.

Ocwen UK was bought by the Royal Bank of Scotland in 1998 and a new company called the "I" Group was set up. I am aware that these names are very familiar to the Minister—although of course I am not referring to the Royal Bank of Scotland. The "I" Group is another extremely disreputable lending company. The Royal Bank of Scotland's intention was to clean up the sub-prime market. In fact, the "I" Group did not adhere to the regulations attached to it by the Royal Bank of Scotland and Ocwen Loans was still being sold and marketed as such until the middle of 2000. The "I" Group has now been bought out by GE Capital. In June of this year, it paid approximately £200 million for £1.6 billion worth of loans.

The difficulty is not keeping tabs on such matters—which is difficult enough—but in drawing together the strands. I want to explain matters as briefly as possible so that the Minister can at least acknowledge the problems. I do not expect her to make a substantive response this morning, but I hope that she will

*[Mr. Barry Gardiner]*

undertake to explore them further. Claims like that by Mr. and Mrs. Rozak are outstanding against the "I" Group, which is owned by GE Capital, which bought it from the Royal Bank of Scotland, and they could be worth about £1.25 billion. Such claims are every bit as good as the Rozaks' claim, and would stand up in court against the group because of the way in which homes have been repossessed by companies that had no legal ownership of the loans outstanding and charged against those properties.

The Government should regulate to make it illegal for any broker to conclude a loan agreement without the inclusion of a standard sheet or form setting out clearly and precisely all remuneration that the broker receives by way of commission or in any other way from the lender or any other party in respect of the contract. The broker is, and should be, the agent of the borrower. The mortgage code lays that down, and it is followed by most of the major mortgage companies and lenders. However, the code is ritually ignored in the sub-prime market, so the borrower does not know of the secret commissions and bribes that are paid when he or she takes out a loan. They form part of the illegal commissions that companies such as CMC, Ocwen and the "I" Group have been receiving and have based their business on in the sub-prime sector for many years.

It is also important that the Government review the decision of the Office of Fair Trading to refrain from taking proceedings in the restrictive practices court in respect of the agreement between City Mortgage Corporation Ltd., Capital Credit Ltd. and Anthony Murtagh, to which I referred earlier. That agreement is no longer in force, but the OFT should initiate proceedings in respect of what happened. The Minister should convene a meeting with GE Capital about the claims that the "I" Group, which it owns, faces about the secret commissions on loan contracts that the group had concluded. The meeting should focus on the practice in the market of pursuing such loans through a party that, although registered at the Land Registry as having a first charge against the property, had no legal ownership of the loans in the first place.

1.54 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Miss Melanie Johnson):** My hon. Friend raises an interesting topic that concerns many consumers. He will forgive me if I concentrate largely on the general issues, because, as he will be aware, I have not received any prior details of some of the specific points that he made.

Many people use consumer credit because of the flexibility that it gives them in their financial planning, and to buy goods and services that they might otherwise be unable to afford. To make informed and confident decisions about credit, consumers need good quality information that allows them to make intelligent choices between different products and makes them aware of the risks to which they may be exposing themselves, especially in the case of loans secured on property. Those points are all relevant to the general thrust of my hon. Friend's argument.

Consumers rely on consumer credit legislation to ensure that they receive the right information to provide them with the necessary protection. That is especially important for so-called non-status credit, when consumers face reduced choice because of problems that they have encountered with credit in the past, and may be at risk of exploitation.

The Consumer Credit Act covers credit of up to £25,000, so it would not cover some of the figures that my hon. Friend cited. It has been on the statute book since 1974, and the bulk of its associated regulations have been in place since the early 1980s. Its essential philosophy—that there should be truth in lending—remains as valid today as in 1974. Several amendments have been made to it since then, but there has been no major reform for almost 30 years. As I believe that there is room for improvement, I announced in July that the Department of Trade and Industry would undertake a wide review of the Act.

Several key factors led me to the conclusion that now is the time to review the Act. Credit products and marketing methods have changed a lot since 1974, and we need to ensure that the Act remains relevant and continues to offer consumers the protection that they need in the modern credit environment. In our election manifesto the Government undertook to increase protection against loan sharks. We need to examine whether existing protections against extortionate credit are effective, and whether provisions on consumer credit licensing can be improved so that the Office of Fair Trading can take vigorous enforcement action against rogue lenders and, when justified, exclude them from the market.

When I was Economic Secretary to the Treasury I decided that the Financial Services Authority should take responsibility for regulating mortgages, and the new regulatory regime is due to start next year. We need to ensure that regulation under the Consumer Credit Act complements the FSA regime.

Last year, the Government set up a task force on tackling overindebtedness. Its report, which I received earlier this year, contains several recommendations that I want to take forward. Some overlap with the subject matter of the Act, and it makes sense to take them forward at the same time as part of our review.

When I announced in July that we would be reviewing the Act, the DTI published a consultation paper entitled "Tackling loan sharks—and more", which set out the key objectives for the review—to develop a new consumer credit regime that targets rogue traders, reduces burdens on legitimate business, reflects market changes in consumer credit and improves the advice and information that consumers receive about consumer credit products.

Many of the changes that we want to make to our consumer credit legislation will have a particular impact on non-status credit. Our proposed changes affecting consumer credit licensing and extortionate credit will crack down on rogue lenders and help consumers who are parties to unfair deals. Our work on improving the transparency of loan information will also help

consumers identify good deals and avoid those that are not such good value. The Director General of Fair Trading used his powers under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 to introduce guidelines to set out practices that he regards as deceitful, oppressive or otherwise unfair or improper, whether unlawful or not, and which would be likely to lead him to take regulatory action against licence holders or to consider his powers under the unfair terms and consumer contracts legislation.

My hon. Friend has raised some interesting questions. The next course of action for him to take would be to set out his concerns in further detail in writing to me at the DTI, and if he does, I shall take up and consider the issues that he raises.

*It being Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the sitting lapsed, without Question put.*

# Westminster Hall

*Wednesday 17 October 2001*

[SIR MICHAEL LORD *in the Chair*]

## Equitable Life

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That the sitting be now adjourned.—[*Angela Smith.*]

9.30 am

**Richard Ottaway** (Croydon, South): It is a matter of profound disappointment that, yet again, Opposition Members must raise the matter of Equitable Life. The only occasion on which the Government have voluntarily made any pronouncement was when they launched their public inquiry, having previously said that they were content with the inquiry being conducted by the Financial Services Authority. The matter concerns not just a few hundred people but millions of policyholders who are suffering trauma and anxiety. The Government's lack of action and leadership is regrettable.

I welcome the FSA's report, but it was published only a little over two hours ago so there has been insufficient time to consider it fully. Why did it take this debate to flush it out? Why could it not have been published earlier? A preliminary flip through it suggests that it raises more questions than it answers. It is a narrow report on a limited period and, rightly, concentrates on improving regulation in the insurance sector. Its conclusions can be summarised by saying that at the end of 1999, when the FSA took over, the die was cast. Interestingly, the FSA was surprised by the outcome of the House of Lords decision that the regulators could have been more proactive.

I first raised the matter on 19 December 2000, and a brief recap may assist hon. Members. During the 1950s, the Equitable started to sell with-profit pensions which gave policyholders a guaranteed annuity rate—more commonly known as a GAR. On retirement, an annuity must be purchased by the policyholder's 75th birthday. During the era of high interest rates in the 1970s and 1980s, GARs gave no cause for concern as the offered annuity rates were well below market rates.

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way so soon.

I worked for Equitable Life from 1970 to 1972, and it may be helpful to our debate if I explain two aspects of the GAR at that time. First, the potential benefit for policyholders was significantly greater if they did not take the GAR, and very few policies were sold on the GAR figures. Secondly, at that time, Equitable Life lent money for house purchase at interest rates of 13 and 14 per cent. fixed for 25 years. When Lord Penrose examines the history of the problem, he will need to bear in mind the extent to which Equitable Life's ability to fund the GAR in the early days was clear from its own business.

**Richard Ottaway:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention, which shows his experience of the matter. I am sure that Lord Penrose will hang on his every word.

Interest rates were higher in the 1970s and 1980s, but when they fell in the 1990s, the policies became a liability to the Equitable. About 90,000 policyholders were entitled to benefit from a GAR higher than the prevailing rate in the open market. That was an attractive proposition to the GAR policyholders, but not to other Equitable policyholders who had to pay for it.

The mistake that previous Equitable boards made was not to address the issue and not to save reserves for a rainy day. Instead, they took a different course of action. As the GAR policies began to mature, the Equitable offset the extra costs by paying a lower final bonus to policyholders with GARs than to those policyholders without GARs. GAR policyholders were, in effect, given a choice between exercising the right to a GAR—in which case the final bonus would be reduced—or relinquishing the guaranteed growth, purchasing an annuity at current market rates, and receiving the full bonus.

The Equitable was entitled to believe that that was the right approach. On 18 December 1998, the Treasury's director, consumer, investment and insurance directorate published a letter—it is in the FSA report—which it described as a "considered view" that endorsed that strategy. Referring to the guaranteed annuities, the directorate said:

> "It would appear possible, depending on the particular circumstances relating to the contract, that any terminal bonus added at maturity may be somewhat lower than for contracts without such options and guarantees, and that this terminal bonus could in some case be applied at current annuity rates."

The advice was clear, easy to understand and confirmed the established practice that had sprung up over the past three or four years. Interestingly, if the FSA was surprised by the outcome of the court case, it clearly thought that the practice was acceptable.

The GAR policyholders, however, were not so enthusiastic. A group of them complained to the Personal Investment Authority ombudsman, who agreed to allow the case to be referred to the High Court. The policyholders lost in the High Court, but had a partial success in the Court of Appeal and an emphatic victory in the House or Lords. That has placed the future of the Equitable in a grave position. The Law Lords published their judgment on 20 July 2001. They found that the Equitable's actions had not been valid, and they obliged it to pay a full bonus to the GAR policyholders and to pay the guaranteed annuity on the whole sum.

As a result two different classes of policyholder have been created in the Equitable: those with guaranteed annuities, and those with annuities at market rates. Consequently, the non-GAR policyholders are funding those with GAR policies. The worst-case scenario liability is believed to be about £2.6 billion. To cover that cost, the Equitable froze its bonuses for seven months, which has raised £1.5 billion. It has also entered into an arrangement with the Halifax, whereby the Halifax is paying £500 million for the Equitable's operating assets. The Halifax will pay a further £500 million on two conditions: it will pay £250 million if the Equitable's compromised proposals are passed, and £250 million if the Equitable's sales force, which is transferred to the Halifax, meets certain performance

*[Richard Ottaway]*

targets. That leaves the Treasury with egg on its face, particularly with regard to the guidance document of 18 December 1998.

When prompted, the Treasury has put up what can best be described as the "Treasury defence": its guidance specifically indicates that any "charge" on policyholders needs to be consistent with the terms of the contract and how that contract has been presented to policyholders. That is a perfectly reasonable position, and was the view of the House of Lords, which reached the conclusion that the Equitable's contract did not provide for a reduction in the final bonus to the guaranteed policyholders.

The Treasury comes unstuck at that point. If five Law Lords can reach that conclusion after looking at the documents for a few days, why cannot the Treasury—with its army of advisers and all the time in the world—also reach the same conclusion? The Treasury must have read the contracts. If it did not, that is negligence beyond anyone's imagination. The guidance was suspended within hours of the Law Lords' judgment. Why? The Treasury argued that the guidance was right, and the FSA agreed with it. The Treasury, after reading the contracts, was satisfied with the Equitable's conduct. It is a regulator's role to reach such a conclusion. Unfortunately for the regulator, he or she got it wrong, and it is for that reason that I believe that the Treasury was negligent.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has indicated that, in his view, the Government are not responsible. What is the point of setting up the Lord Penrose inquiry if the right hon. Gentleman has already prejudged the issue? The Treasury has argued in answer to questions tabled by me and by others that compensation is available only when a firm becomes insolvent. That is disingenuous; a cynic might say that it was a holding argument for the course of the general election.

In truth, Governments are liable to compensate those adversely affected by their negligent advice. No one else was in the position to, or was expected to, give that advice. The public look to the regulator to protect their interests, and in this instance there was a woeful failure. The Government got it wrong. Investors relied on their advice, and the Government must accept responsibility for that.

A number of bodies have conducted inquiries into the matter—so many that we will suffer inquiry fatigue by the time that they have all finished. They include the Institute of Actuaries, the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Office of Fair Trading, the Treasury Committee, the FSA and Lord Penrose. Two ombudsmen have decided not to conduct inquiries.

I welcome any inquiry that sheds light on the failure of the regulatory authorities. The Treasury Select Committee rightly identified some of the key questions for Lord Penrose, especially the risky decision not to establish reserves in 1993. It wishes to ask why the insurance regulator did not address that point. The Minister has had the report from the FSA—which succeeded the Treasury as regulator in January 2000—on her desk for some time. In my view, the FSA has questions to answer. In a preliminary flip through the report this morning, I think I saw that it acknowledges that.

The Equitable welcomed the deal that was made with the Halifax in February 2001, stating that the Equitable's prime objective was

"to strengthen the with-profits funds to the benefit of all members and it was important that policyholders would not be disadvantaged in the future."

Where was the FSA when that statement was made? Did it have any idea that the statement was ludicrous? Did it know that the reserves were so inadequate that a fall in the stock market could affect the situation? Only five months later, the Equitable slashed 16 per cent. off pension fund values.

If the FSA knew that the reserves were inadequate, why did it not speak up? If it did not know, why not? I have the answer. At Treasury questions on 19 July, I raised the point. The Chancellor ducked the issue, and left a junior Minister to answer; the Minister may find that she often experiences that. The managing director of the FSA's insurance section, Mr. John Tiner, wrote to me subsequently to say that he was satisfied with the Equitable's decisions. He wrote:

"The FSA has powers of intervention when it considers the Society is not acting with due regard to the interests of policy holders. Until the Equitable had completed its review and had some firm propositions to make, it is unclear what they (or we) could have told policy holders which would have put them in a better position to make a decision."

In other words, the FSA will not act unless it thinks that it can make things better. I call that the passive approach to regulation. I have news for Mr. Tiner and the FSA. I am unsure whether the Equitable has acted with due regard for some time. The same test was applied in the 1990s, when regulators could have intervened to make things better. The regulator—be it the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury or the FSA—is guilty as charged.

How do we make the charges stick, and how do we bring the Government to book? I hope that the inquiries will provide an answer. I am pleased to say that the FSA has concluded this morning that the regulatory approach is to be strengthened. I am interested to note that the Minister agrees with that, and I welcome her letter in which she says that she encourages the bringing forward of proposals by the end of November.

How does Parliament find out what happened? We have the parliamentary ombudsman, whose role is to decide whether there has been maladministration in government activity. However, he seems reluctant to carry out his duties in this instance. When I referred a complaint from a constituent of mine about Equitable Life, the ombudsman said that he would defer making a final decision until the FSA report became available. This summer, when the Government announced the Lord Penrose inquiry, the ombudsman announced that he had decided to await the outcome of that inquiry, and to consider further at that stage whether he might usefully intervene. That seems to be an example of bobbing, weaving and ducking the punches like a prize fighter at a boxing match.

Sir Gordon Downey, a former Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards, pointed out in a letter to *The Times*:

"Lord Penrose reports to Ministers, the parliamentary ombudsman, who has more powers than Lord Penrose, reports to Parliament. The very least he could do is to investigate whether or not there is a case to answer."

The parliamentary ombudsman must recognise the essential distinction between the Executive and the legislature before Parliament concludes that he is too close to the Executive. He may well argue that there is a precedent in the Barlow Clowes affair. In my opinion, that was wrong as well. The issue is huge—as big as it gets—and the ombudsman must address it without delay.

The concept of saving for retirement is put into question by the Equitable Life situation, particularly the obligation to buy an annuity. In response to questions from myself and others, the Government have made it clear that they do not intend to change the present regime. In the last Budget, they recognised the anxiety that the issue has created but indicated that many of the ideas for reform would incur substantial costs running into hundreds of millions of pounds. In my view, if we can resolve the annuity issue for hundreds of millions of pounds, that is a small price to pay.

The recommendations of Dr. Oonagh McDonald's report deserve closer scrutiny by the Government than they have obviously had so far. There is much unrest concerning this matter, and it seems fair to point out that the Equitable situation would be largely alleviated if there were no obligation to buy an annuity and people had a wider freedom to choose how best to use their lifetime savings.

We have to question how much risk individuals can be expected to take in a pensions system that depends on fluctuating capital markets and income rates. The issue highlights the failure of the private sector to protect individuals against such risk and clearly demonstrates the need for a reappraisal of pensions policy. The Government's stakeholder pensions are simply a way of encouraging lower and middle income groups to begin making contributions to privately funded pension schemes. However, they carry the same market risks as those of the Equitable. If the retirement prospects of the knowledgeable professionals who took out Equitable Life policies could be damaged so unexpectedly, how reasonable is it to expect lower income groups to accept a similar degree of market risk? Investors will need unusually visionary minds when planning for their retirement. That is the exact opposite of what was intended, and will simply put people off making decisions about their retirement.

I conclude by addressing the position of the Equitable. I am extremely grateful for the advice and guidance that I received from policyholders throughout the country and from constituents. It would be an understatement to say that there is a wide range of views and opinions as to the way out. However, it seems that one or two essential principles have already become clearly established. The first is that the past management of the Equitable has been woeful. What on earth did senior managers and directors think that they were doing in guaranteeing a rate of return when they had no idea of what the future held? No one in their right mind would guarantee high rates of return but, having done so, why did they not adopt an investment strategy to back it up? A prudent company would create reserves to back up the situation.

It is my opinion that pointing the finger at those who made those bad decisions is a fruitless exercise. I read reports in the newspapers that legal action may be commenced against past directors, but I believe that that is a complete waste of time. Even if, after years of litigation, such a course of action is successful, where does it get us? They are not rich people, and a few thousand pounds here or there will not make any difference whatever. Some say, "Let us sue the Equitable", but it is for the policyholders themselves to do that, and that would also be a pointless exercise.

There is now a new board. If the previous board did us any favours at all, it was by going quietly and ensuring a smooth transition to the present board under the chairmanship of Mr. Treeves. I must confess that I have never met Mr. Treeves, but I spoke to him on the telephone, when he had the courtesy to warn me of the 16 per cent. cut in policy values. Nevertheless, he seems to be determined to draw a line under the past and to push through the compromise agreement. All policyholders have now received a copy of the proposed compromise and details of the consultation exercise that is being carried out. Yet again, that has produced a plethora of comment and opinion, which leads to the second principle that I think is becoming accepted: that it is not a perfect world.

There are those who want to push the balance of the compromise this way or that, and to point the finger of blame at one group of people or another. Some want to delay while various opinions are sought, and so it continues. Even the legal opinions that have been obtained disagree with one another. The hard, cold, unrelenting truth is that, if the compromise does not go through, the policyholders' position will be much diminished. There is no doubt that the present board will resign, and that the sort of people whom we need to lead us out of the mire will not come forward. It is no surprise that a number of action groups have already recommended a yes vote. Whether or not the Government ultimately chip into the pot is irrelevant, as that would affect only the size of the pot and not its distribution. The lawyers will have a field day and everything will spiral downwards. I leave it to individuals to make their own choice, but no one should be unaware of the consequences of a no vote.

I regret the lack of leadership from the Government. Many people whom they employ, from civil servants to judges, are affected, including staff and employees of the House. It is the Government's approved pension scheme. Many staff in the House are policyholders, and it would be helpful if the Minister were to agree to meet their representatives to alleviate their concerns. If the Government can produce a solution to the Railtrack problem in a matter of weeks, why cannot they act in this case? The country is crying out for the Government to say something, and I mean no disrespect to the Minister when I say that it should be the Chancellor who is replying to this debate and not her. This is a profoundly serious matter that goes to the heart of our financial system and the security that it should be providing for all those who have served their nation well and are entitled to a peaceful retirement.

9.53 am

**Mr. Barry Gardiner** (Brent, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) on securing this extremely important debate. I was concerned by his somewhat partisan opening remarks, and trust that he will agree that hon. Members on both sides of the House have been most assiduous in

*[Mr. Barry Gardiner]*

questioning Ministers on the matter. He may also care to reflect that his remarks about the culpability of the Government as regulator, however true, reflect damningly not on this Government qua regulator alone, as he seemed to suggest, but on successive Governments who failed to spot or control one central problem with Equitable over the past two decades and more.

Today's Financial Services Authority report on Equitable is extremely candid, and I welcome it. It has been impossible in the two hours that have been available to read the report in its entirety, but I would like to draw attention to one section in the report, which is extremely pertinent to our debate, and which strikes at the nub of the problem that existed with Equitable Life. Paragraph 6.1.2 of the report refers to

"the need to maintain a strong solvency position that covers not only current conditions but can cushion adverse changes in the future."

That applies to any insurance company in a position such as that of Equitable. The paragraph continues:

"This is achieved by prudent valuation of the assets and liabilities, and the need to ensure that solvency can still be demonstrated in the event of a fall in equities and/or changes in interest rates."

The report adds:

"The weakness of a company with a low level of free assets can ostensibly be repaired by subordinated loans and accelerating the recognition of future profits by the use of implicit items and financial reinsurance agreements. Those latter features may be viewed as mortgaging the future to strengthen the present and, when in place concurrently with little or no free assets, render the company poorly placed to withstand a major financial shock.

The scale of Equitable Life's potential liability from the unmatched interest rate exposure, which it created when it wrote its GAR business, and the scale of the future profits it had already taken into account, combined to leave Equitable Life seriously exposed to any further financial shock."

That clearly explains, in three brief paragraphs, one of the fundamental problems that lay behind what went wrong at Equitable Life. For that reason, I want to discuss what the Government and regulators may be able to do in future to ensure that such situations do not recur.

The solvency margins that are required by the European Union are universally regarded within the financial community as a complete joke. If one considers the Independent Insurance Company and its recent collapse, it would have met the EU solvency margins four times over at the point of collapse. I recently had the opportunity to discuss solvency margins with Herr Kaulbach, the deputy financial services regulator in Germany, who also said that EU solvency margins were far too low. I found that surprising given that his boss as regulator in Bonn is Dr Müller, who wrote the famous Müller report, which stated that solvency margins were adequate in principle and in practice. However, the Government and the regulators must look again at the solvency margins applied within the EU, and change dramatically the way in which we regard the solvency of a company.

If we consider the north American model, actuaries in Canada adopt a dynamic capital adequacy testing model. That is a risk-based assessment of future trends and parameters, which is far better able to capture the risk exposure of a company and to ensure that its solvency margins are adequate to meet potential risks. When regulators in the United States introduced new risk-based assessment requirements in 1993-94, the histogram showed a dramatic fall in the number of insolvencies—the number was reduced by more than half in the years following the introduction of those models. I therefore urge the Government to consider extremely carefully how this aspect of financial services is regulated in this country and elsewhere in Europe. The FSA is moving in the right direction and is beginning to lead the change towards risk-based assessment, but I fear that in the rest of Europe it will not be able to take many people with it in the immediate future. Other countries are even further back in this respect than we are in the United Kingdom.

Moving on to the current circumstances at Equitable, I was most intrigued to hear the hon. Member for Croydon, South say that Mr. Treeves had had the courtesy to warn him ahead of time of the 16 per cent. cut in the value of funds. When I spoke recently to Mr. Treeves and the new chairman of the company, Mr. Charles Townsend, I challenged him about how some representatives of Equitable Life had, after the application of the market value adjuster to stop people flying from the company, said that no further penalty would be applied to members and that they had to be absolutely secret in company discussjons about the 16 per cent. drop. I find it staggering that the directors of Equitable Life gave advance warning—

**Richard Ottaway:** Before the hon. Gentleman gets too carried away, it was done simultaneously, as the news was announced.

**Mr. Gardiner:** I am extremely glad to hear that the courtesy did not extend, as the hon. Gentleman suggested earlier, to prior warning of what had happened.

I shall pursue the point about the circumstances at the time. Representatives of Equitable Life Assurance company had suggested to members of the public that no further penalties would be applied to their fund. In such circumstances, there has been neglect on the part of the new board of Equitable Life, which must bear responsibility for misinformation being given to members of the public at the time. Although I appreciate the difficulty of negotiating a way forward for policyholders, I do not believe it acceptable for members of the public to be given misinformation by the company about the security of their position at a time when the company intended to slash 16 per cent. off policyholders' funds.

In my debate with Mr. Treeves and Mr. Townsend, I was further troubled by their acceptance that, because of the constraints on Equitable Life at the moment and being unable to take on new business, its future performance would be sub-optimal. We are discussing a company that accepts that its performance relative to the rest of the life assurance market will be substandard in future. It recognises that its performance will be substandard, and a huge question mark hangs over the company and its capacity to weather the storm and secure the agreement that is required. The directors have been clear that they are far from sure that the compromise will be accepted. It would be inconceivable

that an independent financial adviser would advise an existing policyholder not to withdraw their funds now and place them elsewhere to avoid the sub-optimal performance that they admit will take place and the potential confusion and further claims on the company that may arise if the compromise deal does not go ahead.

I am sure that many other hon. Members want to participate in the debate. I could bring many more problems to the attention of the House, but I am sure that the issue will be revisited. On that note, I shall allow others to speak.

**Several hon. Members** rose—

**Mr. Frank Cook (in the Chair):** Order. This is a vexed subject, which requires careful consideration and, in the Chair's view, a fair response from the Government. At the moment, three hon. Members are seeking my eye. I advise that we start wind-up speeches at 10.25 am, which gives us only 20 minutes. I ask hon. Members to bear that in mind and to make their comments clear and concise.

10.6 am

**Mr. Michael Weir** (Angus): The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) has given a succinct resumé of the history of Equitable Life. I do not propose to go into that, other than to say that the plethora of different regulators in the insurance industry over the past few years seems to be part of the problem. Equitable Life policyholders are being asked to consider the compromise proposal without having the full information about the regulator's role before them. They are entitled to that information before being asked to vote on the proposal.

The Government's lack of leadership and openness has led to great deal of suspicion—justified or otherwise—that there is something to hide. That is making Equitable Life policyholders reluctant to deal with the compromise proposal before all the information is in the public arena. The policyholders are entitled to that information. How many hon. Members have heard the remark, "Why should I bother with a pension if this is going to happen?" The situation at Equitable Life is leading to difficulties throughout the pension industry. There is a loss of confidence in pensions. That is a serious problem, especially when the Government are trying to promote stakeholder pensions.

I ask the Government to take on board a particular point. The hon. Member for Croydon, South mentioned briefly the Government's own employees. That matter was first brought to my attention not because of the guaranteed annuity rates but because of worries expressed by constituents within the NHS pension scheme. As the Minister will be aware, in Scotland—I presume that the same applies in England—many people in the NHS pension scheme paid additional voluntary contributions. The Government, through the NHS, were advising people in that scheme to invest AVCs within Equitable Life, and continued to do so even when the difficulties were apparent to them—at least they should have been apparent to them through the regulator.

A constituent told me that, in 1999, he attended a sales presentation given by representatives of Equitable Life that was organised by the NHS on its premises that encouraged NHS employees to purchase AVCs through Equitable Life. The Government, as regulator and as an employer, have difficulties. I appreciate that dual roles cause a difficulty for them, but many of their employees, particularly those in the NHS, are finding that their ultimate pensions will be worth a great deal less than they first believed. The Government must seriously examine the problem. It has been suggested that meetings should be held with representatives of pension schemes within the House, but the problem goes much further than that. Action must be taken to deal with the pensions of those who work in the NHS.

I reiterate the point that the matter goes far beyond Equitable Life. It has caused a drop in confidence in the other life assurance companies that are very important to the Scottish and United Kingdom economies. If the matter is not dealt with, that lack of confidence will have serious long-term effects for all of us who are looking for pensions, as it will on the Government at a time when they seek to establish stakeholder pensions. The issue is not going down well with the general public and a great deal of cynicism exists about pension provisions. Serious consequences will follow in future unless the issue is dealt with.

10.10 am

**Mr. Jim Cousins** (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I will take your advice to be brief, Mr. Cook. I have only two points to make.

**Mr. Frank Cook (in the Chair):** Order. Please also accept my advice to speak up.

**Mr. Cousins:** I am always happy to accept your advice.

At the heart of the issue is the question of reserving policy. If we were to read the financial press for coverage of insurance companies, the question that arises time and again throughout the 1980s and 1990s is that of so-called orphan assets or free assets.

When the House deals with this issue, it should bear in mind that the issue of reserving policy, which caught the public eye and the attention of the press and the media during that period, was not lack of reserves but excess of reserves. That point must be borne clearly in mind when criticising the events of the past. When the technical issue of reserving policy ever caught public attention, the emphasis was always that life insurance providers were carrying excessive reserves.

Equitable Life's strong marketing point was precisely that it was pursuing a policy of not carrying excessive reserves. That is why so many people signed up for policies with the company. In talking about these issues, it is wise not to be too clever after the event. We now see that the central failure of Equitable Life was at the heart of its marketing strategy. Nobody could say that they were not aware of that.

However, it brings into question the issue—and I hope that the Government will address it in due course—of whether the Insurance Companies Act 1982, which established the role of appointed actuary within with-profits funds, did enough to strengthen the powers of the actuaries. It also brings into question whether some of those who had the responsibility of being

*[Mr. Cousins]*

appointed as actuaries were carrying out their duties in the best interests of policyholders. I hope that that serious underlying issue will not be overlooked.

I am a member of the Treasury Select Committee. As part of our inquiry, we were told that the Government Actuary's advice to the regulators, who were within government, was not to be made available to us. We were told that we could not cross-question the Government Actuary about the advice that he may have given to the regulators about Equitable Life's reserving policy. I hope, in the course of Lord Penrose's inquiry, that that advice will be made public. That would allow us to see what was the advice of the Government Actuary on the issue. I also hope that exposing better the advice of actuaries will be one of the main benefits that will flow out of this unfortunate affair.

The hon. Member for Angus (Mr. Weir) said that a great number of regulators were involved and, in form, that was the case. Fortunately or unfortunately, in all cases they were the same two people. There was continuity of personnel, even though the regulators switched institutions, and that will enable a proper examination to be made.

I want to emphasise the point made by the hon. Member for Angus that 40,000 people in the NHS pension scheme have additional voluntary contributions with Equitable Life and that the problem is very serious for them. Half of those people are in the with-profits fund and half are not. Half of the 40,000 went to Equitable Life as a result of transfers back into the NHS scheme, which was a product of mis-selling further on. The problem is serious and it must be addressed outside the terms of Lord Penrose's inquiry. I hope that the Government do not intend to overlook the problem by using the Penrose inquiry as an excuse.

Many people in the civil service pension scheme—for whom the Treasury was the source of advice on superannuation—also have AVCs with Equitable Life. I hope that the Minister will assure us that the issue of AVC policyholders, whether in the public sector, the Government sector or otherwise, will be addressed alongside the Penrose inquiry.

The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) said that the previous board of Equitable Life went quietly. One board member sought quietness on the board of Halifax, but I think that history will show that that was an odd place to seek it.

10.16 am

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): I do not want to detain hon. Members for long. It is fair to say that everyone who has had an association with Equitable Life in a professional or employment capacity is hugely disappointed by the way in which events have turned out. As I said in my intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway), I worked for Equitable Life at its Epsom office for about two years in the early 1970s. I suspect that many colleagues are policyholders with Equitable Life, particularly Surrey Members who were serviced by the Epsom office at that time and subsequently. In those days, very few life offices wrote that type of business, and the two leading companies were Equitable Life and National Provident. I was headhunted by National Provident from Equitable Life, and subsequent to that I became an insurance broker.

Lord Penrose is right to go back to the early days, but I do not believe that the problems arose then, because at that time the guaranteed annuity rate, which is the cause of all the difficulties, was not considered to be particularly attractive. As I indicated in my intervention, it was common for people to be happy to borrow money for mortgages at a fixed interest rate of 13 per cent. or 14 per cent. for 25 years. There was a high interest rate policy for some time and under successive Governments. The guaranteed annuity rate was significantly less than that—I would guess that it was about 60 per cent. or 65 per cent.—so the open-market option was much more attractive.

Conditions changed in two ways. First, many other insurance companies entered the market and in the late 1970s and early 1980s successive Governments made investment in personal pensions much more attractive by increasing the amount of money that could be put into a policy. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), who is an active member of the all-party group on insurance and financial services of which I am the chairman, knows that the group takes a close interest in the matter. He is exactly right to say that Equitable Life pursued a different policy on reserving from other companies.

Many companies have had huge orphan fund problems. For example, Equity and Law recently made an arrangement with its policyholders, of which I am one, to make a payment whereby some of the orphan funds would go to the company. However, Equitable Life was always supposed to be ahead of the game. It was the top and most attractive company, and the one in which everyone ought to be recommended to place their business. I suspect that there were considerable pressures in Equitable Life to maintain that position. I also suspect that the inquiry will find that the slip into not making adequate reserves for a potential downturn in interest rates started about 20 to 25 years ago.

For now, I will merely address two simple points, because it will take a long time to absorb all of the contents of the report. We should have regard for the expectations of the policyholders. They were encouraged to join the mutual society by almost every financial journalist—and public sector workers were encouraged to join to take out various types of investment—and they had a right to expect that the company was properly managed. They also had a right to expect that supervision of the company was satisfactory. That point goes to the heart of the matter. My first reading of the document confirms to me what many hon. Members have suspected; under the prudential supervision of the Department of Trade and Industry and subsequently the Treasury—long before the Financial Services Authority was formed—that supervision was inadequate. The Government must address that issue now.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South has stated, policyholders must now make a choice; as the hon. Member for Brent, North (Mr. Gardiner) said, they have been let down once with regard to the 16 per cent., and they cannot afford to be misled again. I suspect that they have no choice but to accept the offer, which has, I believe, been made in good faith. It would

help them to come to that conclusion if, as several hon. Members have suggested, the Government were to indicate early on that if the inquiry by Lord Penrose pins some of the blame on regulatory failure by the Government, they will do the honourable thing by providing funds. That would reassure the policyholders that their policies will continue to provide the returns to which they are entitled.

10.21 am

**Angela Watkinson** (Upminster): I will not repeat the many valid points raised in the debate, but I wish to refer to a comment made by the hon. Member for Brent, North (Mr. Gardiner) about the advisability of policyholders withdrawing their funds and transferring them elsewhere if the compromise scheme is unsatisfactory to them. That option is not available to many of my constituents who have contacted me with regard to the matter, as they are nearing retirement. Moreover, the transfer of funds by policyholders who are able to do that would exacerbate the problem for those who have no option but to remain in the scheme.

**Mr. Gardiner:** I accept that point; a policyholder who has less than about 10 years to go until retirement would be in an invidious position.

**Angela Watkinson:** These constituents of mine, some of whom are due to retire in less than five years, are facing a very different retirement from that which they had planned and paid for, and they are entirely dependent on the compromise scheme. It has been stated that legal opinion about that scheme is varied, and I urge the Government to clarify the position swiftly. That would alleviate the stress on the many people of ordinary means who have tried to provide for their retirement.

10.32 am

**Dr. Vincent Cable** (Twickenham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) on focusing on the essential problem, which is the issue of government regulatory failure. It is not the job of hon. Members to be financial advisers to our constituents, or to look over the shoulder of the new management and to tell it how to run the company. However, it is our job to scrutinise the Government's actions and to examine the possibility of regulatory failure.

I will make two brief comments about the company and its current situation. I, like other hon. Members, have constituents coming to me with problems with regard to the situation, and it is important to point out to them that their losses can be separated into three different elements: first, the losses associated with the guaranteed annuity rate liabilities, although it is still unclear how open-ended they are—a figure of £6 million has been mooted, but it could be more than that—secondly, the losses that they are experiencing, along with everyone else in the life insurance industry, because of the falling value of the stock exchange; and, thirdly, the losses that they would incur if they chose to withdraw from the society—which are optional losses, as they could choose to participate in the conference rather than to withdraw from the society.

As for the conduct of the company, the hon. Member for Croydon, South was correct to stress that there would not be any great advantage in different groups of policyholders fighting one another in a mutual society. That is the road to mutual ruin and the enrichment of lawyers. However, there is certainly one category that merits detailed attention—that of the auditors' conduct. I find it impossible to understand why Ernst and Young gave the company a completely clean bill of health in 1999, after all the discussion that took place in the City during 1998-99. The regulators were discussing the matter and the memorandum that I produced before a debate in the House in June 1998, when the Department of Trade and Industry was advising about insolvency, also dealt with it. That action was utterly incomprehensible. If there were any possibility for litigation, I would have thought that it lies in that direction.

I return to the key issue, which is the role of the Government. The Government's prime responsibility in the matter now, whatever may have happened in the past, is to ensure that there is a transparent and expeditious process for examining whether there has been a regulatory failure. I agree with the hon. Member for Croydon, South that the present position is a mess. First, there is the Baird report, which appeared at 7.30 am—some of us have had a chance to glance at it. The Baird report was structurally flawed from the outset, because it was a report by the FSA about the FSA, and even if Mr. Baird is a man of enormous integrity, and I am sure that he is, the credibility of this report is bound to be questioned and it will have limited value.

Another basic problem with the Baird report lies in the way in which it has interpreted its own terms of reference. I read the original terms of reference, which state clearly that the report will describe the background and events leading up to the FSA's assumption of responsibility for the prudential regulation of Equitable Life on 1 January 1999. In fact, it has not done that. It seems to have interpreted its brief, in an extremely narrow way, to refer to the FSA's management of the affair after 1999. The report could have gone into the early history, but the FSA chose not to do so.

That responsibility has now fallen to the Penrose inquiry, which we hope will be definitive. It will certainly be very long—we understand that it will take until next summer. It is not clear that it will be entirely in the public domain; I hope the Minister will answer questions about that.

The big problem with the process—the hon. Member for Croydon, South dealt with this very well, but I will reinforce the point—is the way in which it has paralysed the parliamentary ombudsman. I have been writing to the ombudsman to ask him why he cannot get on with the job that Parliament has given him to do. The answer that he gives, in a letter written yesterday, is clear. He states:

> "My decision not to begin an investigation at present was influenced by a consideration of the practical difficulties that will inevitably arise when two bodies attempt simultaneously to investigate matters which, while not identical, will involve a significant degree of overlap."

Why are two bodies conducting overlapping investigations? The answer is that the Government asked them to do so. The parliamentary ombudsman cannot get on with his job because of the structure of the process that the Government have set in train. That is unsatisfactory.

*[Dr. Vincent Cable]*

What can we already say about the evidence of regulatory failure? There are three elements. First, there is the early history, covering the period of the early 1990s, when guaranteed annuities were being written extensively by Equitable Life. One could say that we are wise with hindsight about that practice, but other Members who are knowledgeable about the industry, such as the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), know that the Equitable Life was unique in going so far out on a limb in writing guaranteed annuities on such a scale. It was already becoming apparent that a period of low inflation and low interest rates was upon us. Indeed, the Government of the day adopted the Maastricht targets, which precisely embodied that.

There must surely have been, at some point, an intervention from the Government Actuary advising on the structural soundness of that type of financing. It is important that the evidence of the exchanges between the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury and the Government Actuary is publicly revealed, so that we understand at what point it was clear to the financial community that the policies that Equitable Life were writing were unsustainable. That is one of the key elements in the story that has not yet been revealed.

Secondly, there is the Baird report itself. Obviously, I have not had an opportunity to read it in the few minutes that we have had access to it, but it is already clear in the conclusions that it reaches. Although it is put politely, there are some damning comments on the FSA's role. Section 6.6.1 of the report states:

"At the outset ...'the prudential regulator'...addressed the issue of reserving for the guarantees in a resolute manner. There were, however, some particular issues which the prudential regulator missed or failed to follow up, with which we deal below."

Section 6.6.2 continues:

"In respect of this episode, we believe that if the prudential regulator had been more proactive and adopted a more challenging, carefully co-ordinated and researched approach, then it would have allowed itself more time and been better informed, to consider in conjunction with Equitable Life, how best to manage the consequences...of the judgment of the House of Lords."

The report goes on to describe poor levels of communication and co-ordination between the two arms of regulation. It is for the parliamentary ombudsman to judge whether there has been a regulatory failure, but prima facie, even the Baird report, with its restrictive mandate, seems to find serious faults.

I conclude by suggesting what should be the Government's role in future. The problem, as in the old Irish saying, is that we should probably have started from somewhere else, but I hope that the Minister will give us an assurance that the inquiry will proceed quickly and with the full co-operation of the Government. There should be no attempt to conceal documentation, which should be transparent and in the public domain so that the parliamentary ombudsman can get on with the job.

The hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) and for Angus (Mr. Weir) and others raised the worrying matter of what the episode tells us about the state of the long-term private savings and pensions industry. For far too long in Britain there has been a conceit that whereas the benighted continentals have the problem of unfunded pensions, we do not because we have brilliant financial institutions that look after everyone's private occupational pensions. That illusion and conceit is crumbling rapidly, for several reasons: first, the compulsory annuity problem, which may be resolved as there are solutions available; secondly, the growing problem—it could even be called a crisis—in the with-profits sector. We are probably entering a long-term bear market in equities and many of the assumptions that underlie the growth of bonuses may prove to be fallacious. The confidence that previously existed in private pension provision has been further undermined by chronic and endemic mis-selling, which is undermining the entire structure. The Government must give us a clear lead on the matter of stakeholder pensions and on the future of private and occupational pensions in an environment where confidence has been severely damaged.

10.32 am

**Mr. Christopher Chope** (Christchurch): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) on securing the debate and on showing such a command of the complex issues that are involved. I hope that the Minister will answer his questions and those asked by other hon. Members in this important debate.

When my hon. Friend raised the issue on 19 December 2000, he secured from the Minister who responded a guarantee that there would be an inquiry; today he has initiated the debate and forced the Government to produce their FSA report. To judge by the Minister's body language and the words used in August when the Penrose inquiry reported, it was clear that the Government were toying with the idea of delaying publication of the FSA report until after Penrose. I am glad that they have now come clean and produced the report.

It is disappointing that we were given only two-and-a-half hours notice that the FSA report was being produced. If the Government could produce a report at 7 o'clock in the morning, why could they not do so at 7 o'clock the previous evening, so that people had a chance to read it? I was amazed to discover from representatives of Equitable Life yesterday evening that they were told only at 5.30 pm that the report would be published this morning, and that they could look at it on a website at that time. That is thoroughly unsatisfactory; we are grateful to have the report, but it is a pity that the Minister did not make a greater effort to produce it a few hours earlier so that we had more time to read it.

I hope that the Government will be prepared to use their time to allow a fuller debate of the issues raised by the report. It is no good saying that we will not have a further debate until Penrose has reported. Policyholders must decide in the next few weeks whether to accept the compromise, and they are entitled to the benefit of a Government response on the subject. I am pleased that the Minister is attending the Treasury Committee on 30 October, but that is not enough, and the Government should provide us with a proper debate.

Much of the debate has been about possible regulatory failure. The first question is whether there has been such a failure? The report, especially chapters 5 and

6, suggests strongly that there has. The second question is that if there was a failure, was it caused by the negligence of one or more of the regulators? The parliamentary ombudsman should be getting to grips with that issue straight away. If a regulator was negligent, will policyholders who suffered loss as a result receive compensation? The Minister seems to have answered that question already in a written answer to the hon. Member for Brent, North (Mr. Gardiner) on 15 October. He asked if the Government

"will establish a scheme to compensate policyholders of Equitable Life for losses sustained by them as a result of regulatory failure."

The Minister replied:

"We have no plans to do so."

I am sure that I am not alone in finding that answer contemptible and an insult to policyholders. If a regulator has been negligent, it—or, in other words, the Government—should be open and forthcoming in meeting claims for compensation flowing from that negligence.

I tried to find out whether Lord Penrose would investigate allegations of maladministration by the regulators, but the Minister, in response to a specific question, merely referred me to the terms of reference of the Penrose inquiry, adding:

"The scope of the inquiry being conducted by Lord Penrose is a matter for him, subject to his terms of reference."—[*Official Report*, 15 October 2001; Vol. 372, c. 850-51W.]

That makes me rather suspicious. Many hon. Members have referred cases from constituents to the parliamentary ombudsman, and he should now investigate those issues. As has already been mentioned, he has written to a number of hon. Members during the past few weeks to explain why he should not investigate at the moment. I hope that he will reconsider in the light of today's report, which shows a prima facie case of maladministration. Indeed, he said in February that it would be helpful to read the Financial Services Authority report. He said that it

"may serve to indicate those areas, if any, which warrant further scrutiny by the Ombudsman."

He was right; the FSA report indicates areas that warrant further scrutiny, which I hope that he will get on with straight away.

The problems of Equitable Life affect millions of people, and I must declare as an interest that my wife is a policyholder, although I am not. The former commissioner, Sir Gordon Downey, has argued that the ombudsman should undertake an inquiry now, and his arguments are persuasive. The Penrose inquiry will investigate matters going back 30 or 40 years, or perhaps even longer; the parliamentary ombudsman can investigate only issues that do not fall foul of the 12-month time bar. He could concentrate on the most recent events, which are highlighted in the report before us today.

There is insufficient time to deal with all the issues that have been raised by policyholders, but I hope that the Minister will bring pressure to bear through the regulator to ensure that policyholders receive proper information to enable them to assess whether the compromise proposals are in their interests. They are still waiting to see the financial results up to 30 June, but they should have much more up-to-date information, particularly in light of the dramatic reduction in values that was announced on 16 July.

The Minister will know that her predecessor said in the debate last December:

"The FSA is concerned that material changes to the expectations of Equitable Life policyholders are seen in context, and that policyholders should not rush to take precipitate action. The FSA has advised Equitable's customers to remember that the society remains solvent and that their existing policies are still valid."—[*Official Report, Westminster Hall*, 19 December 2000; Vol. 360, c. 13WH.]

There are many policyholders who, in the light of that advice, did not rush to sell their policies. They now find that, as the new chairman of Equitable Life has admitted, those who withdrew their money before 16 July took a disproportionately larger share of the fund than they were entitled to. Policyholders must not be let down again. They need proper information on which to base their judgment. That should come from the regulator to the individual investment advisers. It is not for us as Members to give that advice, but we can legitimately ask that the framework to make that advice available be established quickly.

I should like now to refer briefly to one or two parts of the report. The Treasury is trying to suggest, and the Minister may be party to this, that it is a "not me guv" situation and that the Treasury was not involved. The report makes it plain that in January 1998 the Treasury took responsibility from the Department of Trade and Industry for the prudent regulation of insurance companies, and from 1 January 1999 it contracted out that role to the FSA but did not surrender or abandon it. That is why the comments in the report about what the Treasury knew and the action that it should have taken but did not take are particularly pertinent.

Those who have had a chance to read the report will know that in August 1998 there was widespread awareness of the problems facing Equitable Life policyholders and memorandums were flying round the Treasury and other parties. Presciently paragraph 5.6.2 states that one of the Treasury memorandums noted that that was

"an example of an issue on which we will need to work closely together to ensure a seamless regulatory approach."

That was in autumn 1998. If the Treasury had followed its own advice, I doubt whether policyholders, particularly those who joined after that, would have been in their current mess.

There are a number of other damning indictments of Treasury involvement. It is clear from paragraph 5.7 and the following paragraphs that the Treasury was aware that the policies being issued by Equitable Life and the related advertising were not accurate. It knew that back in 1998 although nothing was done about it. Indeed, when the matter was raised in 1999 there seemed to be some doubt as to how anyone found out about it originally.

The suggestion running throughout the report is that the Treasury was slow on the uptake and that it did not investigate and take a hands-on approach when it should have done. As a result, policyholders have been let down. There is clear evidence that the Treasury needs to allow the parliamentary ombudsman to investigate these issues on an independent basis. I hope that it will not stand in the way of that. I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say.

10.43 am

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Ruth Kelly):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Richard Ottaway) on securing this debate. He set out the background to these events clearly and I do not intend to repeat them. I express at the outset my deepest sympathy for all those Equitable Life policyholders, including those who have taken out additional voluntary contributions, who have been affected by recent events. I fully understand the distress and anger that they feel. I should also like to say at the outset that it is not the Treasury that advises people in the public sector about what policies they should take out. It would be inappropriate for the people who provide policy advice on financial services to do so. It is their employers who take that responsibility.

The House will know that I announced on 30 August that the Government had established an independent inquiry under Lord Penrose into events at Equitable Life. Equitable Life indeed raises important issues, many of which have been raised today. The issues deserve full consideration by an independent inquiry, which will consider what lessons can be drawn for the conduct, administration and regulation of life assurance business.

Lord Penrose's terms of reference are:

"To inquire into the circumstances leading to the current position of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, taking account of relevant life market background; to identify any lessons to be learnt for the conduct, administration and regulation of life assurance business; and to give a report thereon to Treasury Ministers.

Those terms of reference will enable Lord Penrose to consider events at Equitable Life from all angles. By virtue of its wide-ranging remit, Lord Penrose's inquiry will be able to look back as far as necessary to establish the origin and development of problems. It can look in detail at the actions not only of the Financial Services Authority but of the society and all other key players. He can investigate issues that have a bearing on the subject, regardless of where and when they arose. It is important that all the lessons are learned from what has happened. The inquiry will allow us to achieve that.

I have written to Lord Penrose today, enclosing a copy of the FSA report into Equitable Life, published by the Treasury this morning. I have taken the opportunity to publish that report as early as possible and in time for Members to consider the information in front of them before our debate.

In line with its terms of reference, the FSA's report analyses the conduct of business and prudential supervision from January 1999 until the society closed to new business in December 2000. The report provides a helpful contribution to investigating problems at Equitable Life, but it is not—and could not have been—a full picture of events. I would like to thank Mr. Baird, who conducted the inquiry, for his report and all the useful research that it contains. The review could not look back more than two years out of a total of more than 40. Nor could it investigate the roles of all involved, the deep-rooted nature of the problems or the actions of Equitable Life itself. Mr. Ronnie Baird and his team at the FSA had no access to documents held by Equitable Life or its advisers. Nor could the inquiry conduct interviews with any of the board members, staff or professional advisers. As such, it was unable to examine events as they unfolded.

Problems at Equitable Life clearly date back many years. As the report makes clear, the seeds were sown as far back as the 1950s when the first guaranteed annuity policies were sold. A full explanation will have to wait for Lord Penrose's review and report. In my letter to Lord Penrose, I made it clear that the Government recognise that the FSA report will provide a valuable input to his inquiry, but he cannot, of course, be bound by it or its recommendations. He will wish to form his own views on the basis of the evidence that he gathers.

Although we expect that Lord Penrose will wish to investigate events of recent years, including those that took place after Equitable Life closed to new business—a period that the FSA report was not asked to cover—he will also be free to go back as far as he thinks necessary.

In his reply to my letter, Lord Penrose says of the FSA report:

"As you rightly observe, it covers a relatively short period and is narrower in focus than the Inquiry I have been asked to undertake. In particular, my Inquiry will have to look more deeply than the review team have been able to at the activities of the Society, its directors and managers in relation to the classes of business that are of primary interest. This difference of focus is bound to be reflected in the conclusions I shall reach."

He continues:

"Nevertheless, the narrative of the evidence collected by the review team, and the comments made in the report, provide a valuable insight into the culture and workings of the regulatory authorities over the period. The report will help focus lines of inquiry extending over the longer period I shall have to address, even though it cannot, of course, confine the scope of my Inquiry."

The Penrose inquiry will look into the circumstances leading to the current situation at the Equitable. It will not comment or offer advice on the merits of any compromise deal proposed to Equitable Life policyholders and nor will it review past judicial decisions in relation to Equitable, or pre-judge future decisions which will be rightly taken by the courts. I very much hope that interested parties will co-operate fully with Lord Penrose's inquiry in its current non-statutory form, but I have made it clear that if Lord Penrose considers that there is a failure of co-operation, I will not hesitate to put the report on to a statutory footing.

Lord Penrose began to work full time on his inquiry as soon as it was announced at the end of August. He is determined to complete his report as soon as possible. Hon. Members have made clear today the importance of that. I agree with them. Lord Penrose will be able to consider some of the detailed issues that have been raised today, including the role of the appointed actuary. I shall today also issue a consultation paper setting out proposals for the situation where an appointed actuary will have to report information to the FSA. This will form part of any potential review of the role of the appointed actuary, which is also considered in the Baird report.

The FSA report makes several recommendations about the regulation of life insurance. In particular, it has called for improved solvency and disclosure standards to ensure the prudential framework for life assurance adequately reflects the nature, direction or scale of business. Under the new regime—which will come into force at the end of November—created by the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, that will be the responsibility of the FSA. Some of the recommendations will necessarily involve consultation with the industry and I am anxious that the FSA should take it forward as a matter of urgency.

The report also makes several extremely important recommendations on strengthening the regulatory approach—the culture, processes and tools of the FSA—to ensure that it achieves the "role, style and approach" envisaged for the FSA as a single integrated regulator. In particular, it recommends that the FSA should take a more proactive approach to regulating the insurance industry to ensure that the interests of customers are properly protected; that it should take action to break down all remaining barriers to internal communication and co-ordination, to achieve the full benefits envisaged when the FSA was established; and that it should improve its use of risk-assessment techniques. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Mr. Gardiner) pointed out some reforms that will be taken forward in this area. I am sure that he is aware that the FSA is considering insolvency standards in that area.

The proposals are core ones. The Government expected that, for example, brigading conduct of business regulation and prudential supervision into one organisation would create opportunities for an integrated approach, even in advance of the enactment and implementation of the Financial Services and Markets Act. From N2—the end of November this year—the Act will be implemented in full. The transition period will be over and we expect all the benefits to exist. The FSA report is clear that the benefits of an integrated proactive, risk-based regulator will be substantial. Accordingly, I have today written to the chairman of the FSA, Howard Davies, asking him to pursue vigorously the recommendations contained in the report, particularly those relating to the problems of poor communication.

Given the importance of those issues to delivering the benefits of the new approach, I have asked him to provide me with a full report by 20 November, covering the action taken to implement the recommendations. That does not mean that we were wrong to establish the Financial Services Authority. On the contrary, the FSA's report shows that the Government were right to make reform of the existing framework of financial regulation a priority on taking office, and that the situation at Equitable would have been worse without a single regulator in place over the past two years.

The FSA report that we published today is only a partial picture. We set up the Penrose inquiry to provide us with a far wider perspective, not to apportion blame but to learn lessons and ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

**Mr. Chope:** If the report will not apportion blame and is only partial, how can the Minister already have pre-judged whether the Treasury will in any circumstances pay compensation to policyholders?

**Ruth Kelly:** I have looked at some issues with regard to the use of public money. In particular, when I announced the public inquiry by Lord Penrose, I said that we had considered the use of public money to inject funds into a lifeboat for Equitable Life and had specifically ruled that out as an option. We do not think that that is the appropriate way forward; rather, we should learn all the lessons from the Equitable Life situation to minimise the risk of such a scenario happening again. That is how the terms of the Penrose inquiry were drawn up.

I will not stand here today and prejudge the outcome of Lord Penrose's review. Several hon. Members have questioned the independence of Lord Penrose, but I wish to underline that the reason why we cannot say specifically what he is looking at or how the review is developing is precisely the independence of that review.

**Richard Ottaway:** If Lord Penrose finds that there has been a regulatory failure, the Government must be liable. Is not the right approach for the Government to say that they have an open mind on whether compensation should be paid, rather than to rule it out at this stage?

**Ruth Kelly:** I certainly would not pre-judge any recommendations that Lord Penrose will make. It is open to him to pursue the lines of inquiry that he sees fit.

**Mr. Gardiner:** I am grateful to the Minister for her comments, because I believe that we can take some solace from her words. It would be imprudent to set any course or to put in words anything that might influence the inquiry to reach one conclusion or another. However, I listened to the Minister's words carefully and think that they are well judged.

**Ruth Kelly:** I thank my hon. Friend for those comments. It is absolutely clear that an independent report was necessary in the public interest, and that is exactly why we decided to set up the Penrose inquiry. I expect Lord Penrose to report as soon as he thinks that he is able to, which I hope will be some time next year.

**Mr. Cousins:** I welcome what the Minister said about strengthening the role of the appointed actuary; that is a fundamental point. However, will Lord Penrose be able to review the role of the Government Actuary in the advice that was given on the Equitable Life situation?

**Ruth Kelly:** Action has already been taken as regards the Government Actuary's department, and actuaries responsible for life insurance have been fully incorporated into the FSA. Clearly, it is a benefit of a seamless and integrated regulator that they should be. Lord Penrose will be able to review any actions that he wishes to within his terms of reference. Of course, that could include the role of the actuaries.

Given the importance of the issues, I stand ready to brief the House as events unfold. I have offered to appear before the Treasury Committee and shall do so shortly.

**Mr. Frank Cook (in the Chair):** This has been a splendid debate, displaying exemplary standards of preparation, delivery, candour, regard and mutual respect. However, we are compelled by the rules to move on to the next topic for consideration, which is the London Underground. I ask right hon. and hon. Members to leave the Chamber quietly so that we can get on with our business.

## London Underground

11 am

**Harry Cohen** (Leyton and Wanstead): I thank Mr. Speaker for granting me this debate on the London Underground. I want to concentrate on future investment and funding plans and the Government's proposed public-private partnership.

I received a letter from Mr. Double, the director of the City Remembrancer's Office in the City Corporation. He wrote:

"You will already be aware of the importance the City attaches to an efficient rail network servicing London. In the City Corporation's view, there is undoubtedly a need to improve the rail transport system and in particular to modernise the London Underground, including the Central Line. The Corporation's strong interest in the Crossrail project, which should do much to improve transport in the capital, also reflects this concern."

He asked me to bring his remarks to the attention of the House. I support his sentiments strongly on improving the Central line, upon which my constituency depends, and Crossrail. We need new capacity; Crossrail would provide that, and relieve overcrowding. There should be extra investment above what the Government now propose.

The Government have pledged £13 billion of new investment over the next 15 years, which is welcome, but a similar pledge was made before the 1997 election. It is disappointing that so little progress has been made. In their first term, the Government set up the Greater London Authority and the office of the London Mayor, but the court case this summer showed that the Government have been in control all along. More progress should have been made. The Government have said that they put £1 billion more into London Underground in their first term. That is true, but £2 billion went on the extra cost of the Jubilee line extension, so the rest of the infrastructure suffered during that first term.

There has been serious decline. Figures obtained by the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) for signal and points failures and track failures show a 35 per cent. increase for 2000-01 in comparison to 1999-2000. There were nearly 1,280 hours of delays in a 12-week period from January, showing the deterioration in the tube.

An article on the front page of today's edition of *The Guardian* states that anticipated investment has been cut by 30 per cent. The report states that when my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister was Secretary of State, he indicated that a grant of £775 million could be expected for the tube in this financial year, but that ended up as only £520 million. That did not really make an impact on the decline that I have mentioned, and it was against that background that the Government proposed their version of a public-private partnership. I feel that the Government are showing inflexibility, which is a matter for concern. It is also regrettable that they have fallen into dispute with the Mayor and his Transport Commissioner Bob Kiley.

I want to talk about the Secretary of State's press aide Jo Moore. Her 11 September bad taste e-mail—

"It is now a very good day to get out anything we want to bury"—

rightly has been criticised. The Home Secretary called it "extraordinarily stupid" and the Secretary of State for International Development described it as "cynical". However, it was the only serious breach of the Prime Minister's invocation that we stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States in moral outrage about the events of 11 September. She has apologised, there has been an official reprimand and, in my view, she should be encouraged to find alternative employment.

That incident overshadowed another issue that came to light; an official effort to denigrate Bob Kiley. Mr. Evans, an honourable civil servant, was removed from his post. He is said to have lost the confidence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he refused to be involved in political briefing to vilify Mr. Kiley. Members of the Labour party, trade unionists and Londoners do not want backbiting and spitefulness. They want consensus and co-operation with the Mayor. The Mayor was elected to do the job and, in due course, he and Mr. Kiley will have to take a degree of responsibility for the tube. The Secretary of State should apologise for that campaign of vilification against Mr. Kiley.

If Mr. Kiley were so useless, why, at the beginning of May, did the Prime Minister ask him to take charge of the negotiations with the PPP bidder? Vilification was not a good approach for the Government to take, and it should be abandoned. If the Government want to criticise Bob Kiley, Ministers need only look at Ian Williams' article in *Tribune* on 27 July. He points out the problems with the New York system, but also states:

"So what is the good news? First, the system is cheap with a flat fare of around £1 regardless of distance. Ridership is way up and the system is perceptibly better policed and clean than it was before. Air conditioning helps on the trains as well."

I wish we had air conditioning on our trains.

"There is investment in rolling stock and in upgrading stations. And, for all its faults, it is a 24-hour system as befits a world city. What capitalist secret could Kiley bring from New York? Simple. Money works and more money works harder. New York's recipe for success is simply a return to pre-Margaret Thatcher days: a low flat fare with intermodal transfers and lots of national government money...And of course, there is private finance. However, instead of dirtying the money through the hands of financial intermediaries, New York Transit Authority raised $5 billion in bonds at preferential rates for the current capital plan and even got half a billion from New York City bond flotations. The transit authority takes the money and uses it."

That is a statement of what could be done in London. I am concerned by value for money, accountability and effectiveness of investment.

This is the first opportunity to raise in the House a report released in the summer by Deloitte & Touche. It compared, for value for money purposes, the PPP proposals with the normal public sector financing approach. London Underground sought to stop both its publication and its progress to the National Audit Office. However, Mr. Justice Sullivan allowed its publication on 31 July. He stated:

"Once the PPP agreements have been concluded, the horse will have bolted. If Deloittes are right, it will be a very expensive bolting. It is only right that their view about the V[alue] F[or] M[oney] condition should be placed in the public arena, together with all the other views, so that the electorate may be assisted in making its choice in due course."

I shall provide the Chamber the headings of the executive summaries in the report:

"Neither the 30 year nor the seven-and-a-half year comparison provides a satisfactory basis for establishing—value for money. Highly material adjustments to the—public sector comparator—are judgmental, volatile or statistically simplistic...Some of the statistical analysis is arbitrary and could be mis-interpreted by the reader...Selection of preferred bidders too early in the process could lead to a materially adverse impact on—value for money. The financial advantages of selecting—a specific contractor as the...preferred bidder depend upon judgmental adjustments...Public sector bond financing has been largely dismissed."

**Mr. Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is making a very serious speech, and I am worried that not enough of his London Labour colleagues—with the exception of the hon. Member for Brent, North (Mr. Gardiner)—are present to hear his remarks. Having read Deloitte & Touche's report, does the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead believe that the Public Accounts Committee, with the support of the National Audit Office, should conduct an urgent inquiry into the public-private partnership for London?

**Harry Cohen:** Yes, I support that proposal. As for my London colleagues, I know that they will read the account of this debate avidly.

In his article of 26 August, Will Hutton of *The Observer* refers to the "mendacious gerrymander" exposed by the Deloitte & Touche report. Will Hutton is a director of the Industrial Society, and in the past has spoken in favour of proper public-private partnership as a means of investment. His excellent summary refers to "four dodges" which I want to read into the record:

"Dodge One: Everybody recognises that there would be substantial efficiency savings of around 20 per cent if LU were offered the same framework as the private contractors—the guarantee of a high subsidy over years and the capacity to raise external finance freely as investment needs dictated.

The Government cannot accept this, thus the concept of 'reputational externality' has been introduced—out of thin air. This is the imputed £700 million cost LU must bear because it assumed that as a public organisation it is bound to fail to deliver and raise the financing costs of the public sector generally."

**Mr. Barry Gardiner** (Brent, North): I recall clearly the article to which my hon. Friend refers, but does he accept that the journalist concerned is making a mendacious point? When looking at a public sector comparator, one must remember that any cost overruns would be borne by the taxpayer rather than the public sector. In assessing the private finance method and the public sector comparator, one must make a financial assessment of the quantum of that risk. It is absolutely legitimate to try to put a price on that risk.

**Harry Cohen:** I will come to the point about private sector risk-taking, but as Will Hutton says, it was not right to state that the public sector comparator would cost £2.5 billion more.

**Mr. John Horam** (Orpington): The hon. Gentleman is making a very interesting speech. I, too, am sorry that—excluding Ministers—he is supported by only one of his colleagues, the hon. Member for Brent, North (Mr. Gardiner).

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington): He is opposed by his colleague.

**Mr. Horam:** Indeed. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in addition to more Labour Members, a Treasury Minister should also be present in the Chamber? It is clear that the real villain of the piece is the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has controlled the situation from the beginning and continues to do so. That is why London is still suffering.

**Harry Cohen:** I hear the hon. Gentleman's point, and I shall refer to the Chancellor.

The article by Will Hutton continued:

"Dodge Two: London Underground is such an organisational no-hoper and bound to manage any investment programme so disastrously as a public enterprise that there will be problems for passengers. LU's estimates of the 'performance adjustment' have bounced around between £460 m and £1.34 bn, finally settling on £1.17 bn. But this is not a real but an imputed cost, subject to political exigency.

Dodge Three: London Underground, because it is a public organisation, has no capacity to learn from its mistakes, but instead is condemned to repeat them on the same or even greater scale. Thus because there have been major cost overruns, such as building the Jubilee line, it is forced to assume it can never improve its systems to do better as it is in the public sector and thus is organisationally stupid. Cost: £1.576 bn.

Dodge Four: As no private sector organisation ever makes mistakes it is assumed that the private contractors will deliver what they promise to budget and there will be no upward renegotiation of a contract—ever. This report cannot be read without a mounting sense of incredulity and anger. It is hard to see how the National Audit Office can accept the spurious reasoning."

He added that to lift the performance of the London tube, it would need to be run by an innovative and creative organisation managing an integrated system, and that that is not what the PPP could deliver.

I received a reply from the Minister in July about the comparator. He said:

"We will make this judgment guided by the results of the robust public sector comparator that London Underground has constructed."

Alongside the Will Hutton article, the Minister's response gives a new definition to the word robust. What is the total investment proposed, and what are its components? When I asked staff of the London Underground at the Labour party conference, they were vague. They talked of £900 million a month being introduced, but the total figure, or who was paying what, was not clear. At the party conference, the Chancellor said:

*[Harry Cohen]*

"And on London Underground we plan to invest not less public money but more, an extra £13 billion of public funds, the biggest public investment programme in the history of the Underground. And it is precisely because we are determined to avoid a repeat of the unacceptable extra costs of the Jubilee Line's delays and overruns—nearly £2 billion paid unnecessarily by the public sector to the private sector—that we are requiring that the private sector accepts its responsibilities, tied in to a proper partnership to raise capacity, improve safety, enhance reliability, and ensure that the £13 billion we invest delivers the best public service and protects public interest."

The Minister's July reply quoted the £13 billion figure and said that an estimated 20 per cent. of finance for these plans would be provided by the private sector with the remainder coming from London Underground fares and Government grants. Is the Chancellor right? Will the public be putting in £13 billion? If that is the case, what will the private sector invest? Will it be a greater total? What is the amount expected from fares? Can we have some clarity on the total amount?

**Mr. Eric Pickles** (Brentwood and Ongar): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's fascinating speech. He mentioned the Labour party conference, but did he attend the question-and-answer session at which the Secretary of State promised that if independent evidence were produced to suggest that PPP did not offer value for money, PPP would not go ahead? Does the hon. Gentleman consider that the Deloitte report provides that evidence?

**Harry Cohen:** The Secretary of State did say that, and repeated it to the London group of Labour Members.

I would like the Minister to tell me what the total investment will be. What will be the input from the private infracos? What is their rate of return and what is it based on? Are they spending public money? If so, why should they get a rate of return at all? Or should not that rate be much less than if they were putting in their own money? Will they be getting their return before they have invested anything, or before they have invested the full amount? The Government have said that they will impose penalties on them if they do not perform, but will those penalties be paid for by public money? We need some answers.

Will the arrangement be comparable to that for the Isle of Skye bridge? That was the subject of a good article by Ian Aitken, again in *Tribune*, which is well worth reading; I recommend it to hon. Members. The islanders have to pay £5.70 each way to cross the bridge. He said that that was doubly outrageous given that £25 million of the cost of the bridge was shelled out by the taxpayer and only £500,000 came from the PFI consortium, which is now pocketing more than £3 million a year in revenues. I am worried that we will have that kind of set-up with the private infrastructure companies in London Underground; that is why we need to see the figures.

What are the implications of the Railtrack collapse? The language coming from the Government is of the private sector taking the risk, but the infracos will surely demand more cash and more profit, which will mean less value for money and perhaps none at all. The contracts are for 30 years with reviews after seven and a half years. What will happen at those reviews? Have the Government burned their bridges in terms of other options, so that if the infracos want substantially higher prices there will be no option but to pay them?

A process of perverse output accounting is taking place, although I am in favour of a degree of output accounting. In July, I asked a parliamentary question about London Underground's private finance initiative contracts. Following my hon. Friend the Minister's response—about more than £1 billion of investment in facilities such as the British transport police station at West Ham and better ticketing services—there was a footnote:

"The investment value is not the actual amount the private sector is investing in London Transport. Instead it is London Transport's estimate of what investment in PFI projects would have cost had they done the investment themselves."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 655W.]

That is not the same thing as the actual amount that the private sector is investing. That form of accounting has serious implications, because it disguises the actual level of private sector investment and is, potentially, a fraud on the public. If it were applied to the PPP, the rate of return could end up being paid on money that was not actually invested. That is unacceptable. Will the public be given a clear understanding of what the private sector actually invests, and will there be proper accounts?

It is right to mention the Jubilee line extension at this point. The Chancellor described the £2 billion cost overrun on that project as a mistake that must not be repeated. LUL, which was presumably responsible for the extension and the cost overrun, has been put in charge of the current contract negotiations without any assistance from the Government or any other outside expertise. If the Government are saying that it was to blame for the Jubilee line cost overrun, it is strange to give it the chance to make similar mistakes.

**Mr. Gardiner:** It strikes me as odd, given that my hon. Friend agrees that LUL was poor in its performance in negotiating the contract for the Jubilee line extension and criticises the fact that it has been put in charge of negotiations on this occasion, that he should now want it to run the whole system.

**Harry Cohen:** I do not. The Minister outlined LUL's position on the Jubilee line overrun and said that it was not attributable to quality estimating. He said that significant risks and programme changes, such as those occurring as a result of the collapse of a tunnel—the project was using a new Austrian tunnelling method—at the concurrent Heathrow Express project, were the major contributors to the cost overruns.

If something similar happened again—a collapse of a tunnel, for example, with big implications for the infrastructure of the underground—I do not believe that the contractors, the infrastructure companies, would take the risk. That was a major tunnelling collapse, which had international implications. If that happened again, would the contractors of similar projects take risks? I do not believe it.

We need to see what is in the contracts. Will they mention risks specifically, or only generally? In that case, companies might accept liability, or they might not. Will there be absolute, unlimited requirements in

the contracts, and can the public see them? Bob Kiley said that the risks will not be transferred wholesale, and that contracts will not cover risks concerning track, tunnels and signals. What if the water table rises, which in London it could, and causes damage? That would probably not be covered either. What will the contracts say about the potential cost of risks? Are there going to be fixed prices, or will the infrastructure companies simply be able to raise their prices should the risk materialise?

*The Observer* on 4 March mentioned the likelihood of "constant contractual disputes". London Underground had not even completed an inventory of the assets that it was going to pass over, implying a weak position for post-contract negotiations. Is the Minister satisfied that the contract will be absolutely watertight this time?

On safety, the international engineering consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff has produced a report on safety standards. Its findings included:

"We conclude...that LUL's Standards, in their current form, are inappropriate and inadequate to serve as an effective management control mechanism to protect the public interest in performance-based PPP contracts with privately owned Infracos."

It added that "Subject Committees" would be present

"to oversee changes to the mandatory Category 1 standards. However, all other standards will be...susceptible to change by the Infracos",

and, effectively, will be "self-regulating." The infracos can change them themselves.

The report, referring to disputes about standards, says that each standard

"could potentially become the basis of a PPP variation order, with consequent demands by the Infracos for increased compensation, risk mitigation, and relief from the PPP performance regime...As the contract allows the Infracos a degree of self-regulation, the Standards Regime could soon fall into disrepute and become unmanageable as a contractual oversight mechanism."

A further point is:

"The three different Infracos are under no obligation to co-operate and LUL could end up with three different sets of Category 2 standards controlling working methods."

That is a pretty damning verdict, as it states how difficult it will be for that management tool to ensure proper safety.

The railway inspectorate's report was due to be published in March, and then in July; it has since been put off again. The inspectorate made a statement saying that London Underground and new companies would have to jump a significant hurdle before a final version of the safety case could be accepted. I understand that the inspectorate has written its report, but it seems to have been suppressed and delayed. Can the Minister tell us where it is and when we are going to see it?

On PPP contracts, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told a group of London Labour Members that he would take independent advice—it would be interesting to know who will give that advice—on the outcome of the London Underground infrastructure company negotiations. He would then make his decision, for which he would be held accountable, and then release whatever documentation he could. That sounds reasonable, but it is not.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington): Does the hon. Gentleman consider that advice from PricewaterhouseCoopers would be independent if that was where the advice was sought?

**Harry Cohen:** I would not want to cast a slur on PricewaterhouseCoopers and I do not know who will be chosen, but the Government should announce who it is to be. If the hon. Gentleman has a point to make about PricewaterhouseCoopers, he can make it during his speech and I will listen with interest.

The matter is complex and all aspects should be in the public domain before contracts are signed and irrevocable commitments are made. When the contracts have been signed, it will be too late for proper prior scrutiny, and Parliament will have been treated as a rubber stamp. Londoners want to know all the implications and to be satisfied that value for money will be achieved; they want to know that much-needed investment will not be wasted. There is already talk of station shopping malls taking priority over tracks and signalling. We must see the details before they are agreed to. The Select Committee on Transport recommended publication of the contracts before the decision was made.

In July, the Minister told me in reply to a written question:

"I understand that London Underground intends to publish the contracts once negotiations have been completed and will make available information on performance."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 2001; Vol. 371, c. 195W.]

Does that mean that contracts will be published before they are signed and agreed to by the Secretary of State? Perhaps the Minister will clarify what he said in his answer to me.

Unified management is much needed. A briefing to Labour Members in July stated:

"There will be no privatisation of the Tube. London Underground must always own and run the Tube. Nobody wants to repeat the mistakes of rail privatisation. There is a defined role for the private sector in making the investment happen. But the public sector must always be in charge."

I welcomed those comments, but there will be a split—it will not be the same as that with Railtrack—under the PPP between the operation of services and maintenance. Also, the tube will not be under public control between 1 am and 5 am when it is handed over to the infrastructure companies. There is a danger that the infracos will drive policy in their own interests, swallow cash and insist on priorities that may not be the same as

*[Harry Cohen]*

London Underground's priorities. They may be able to ignore the Mayor and Londoners' wishes. What relationship will the companies have with Transport for London and the Mayor? When will London Underground become part of Transport for London? At the recent meeting with London Underground, doubts were raised about who is to run the business for the public sector. It was suggested that the business may be leaderless. When will the necessary appointments be made?

The Minister has been helpful and has given me some good and open answers, but many unanswered questions and too much uncertainty remains. That is deeply destabilising. There is great potential for the matter to go wrong with spectacular cost for years to come. Sir Cameron Mackintosh stated in the *Evening Standard* on 3 September that

"The Underground has taken over from the Dome as the nation's fiasco."

I do not believe that, but we do not want the matter to reach that stage, and serious concerns exist. For example, the TUC stated:

"PPP is deeply flawed and it cannot deliver the safe, affordable and quality tube system that all those who live, work and travel in London deserve....We call on the Government not to close off dialogue but to urgently discuss the way ahead with the Mayor's Transport Commissioner, trade unions and other key partners."

The executive group of London Labour Members stated:

"We regret the Government's announcement ... to impose the modified public private partnership for the tube.

While supporting the role of the private sector in construction works, and welcoming the £13 billion investment which will follow, we believe that Londoners must be satisfied that Bob Kiley's concerns over safety have been met. We recognise that the Government has attempted to meet these concerns, but we believe the proposals remain flawed.

We therefore urge both sides to re-open negotiations immediately in order to resolve the outstanding issues of safety and maintenance."

In his article in *Tribune* on 13 July, Ian Aitken said:

"The reality behind the whole controversy is that there would be no question of pursuing anything so bizarre as the Government's Heath Robinson scheme for the Tube if it were not for Gordon Brown's unhealthy obsession with the Treasury's rules for public borrowing. These rules assert, quite arbitrarily, that borrowing by public institutions like the nationalised industries counts toward the dreaded public sector borrowing requirement, and is therefore a bad thing. Borrowing by private institutions, on the other hand, does not, even if the money is raised from exactly the same lenders. It is therefore a good thing.

This is frankly bonkers."

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): Why have Her Majesty's Government gone against the evidence not just of the London transport commissioner, but of the Select Committee, Labour Members, the TUC and others; particularly in light of the Railtrack fiasco, which showed that providing public money to a private operator did not provide a solution? How will the PPP proposal for the underground differ?

**Harry Cohen:** There are significant differences between the London Underground PPP and the Railtrack one, but it falls to the Minister to respond to the general thrust of the hon. Gentleman's point.

In his letter to me of 6 July, Bob Kiley said:

"My negotiations . . . concluded that the current procurement could not be structured to guarantee that new trains would be delivered, that stated investment programs would be carried out, or that maintenance would proceed under standards acceptable to LUL. The only solution was for the bidders to provide LUL with control of core management functions. The bidders could not accept this, leaving no solution within the PPP structure.

The way forward . . . is to drop the current procurement and take up a safer, quicker and more economic system, bringing massive private-sector participation to clearly defined projects. We can bring new trains and fully repaired tracks to London years ahead of the timescale currently envisaged by PPP. It is a shame that so much time and money has been expended to date on the fruitless negotiations around PPP rather than in progressing a detailed investment programme."

I urge greater Government flexibility. Private sector involvement and finance is acceptable, but must be under the full control of the public sector. London Underground is a public service, not a profit-making conduit. The proposed version of the PPP seems to contain many flaws. The Mayor will eventually have to take over responsibility for the tube. He was elected to do so. It makes no sense—including from a Labour party-political perspective—to tie his hands behind his back. We should be at ease with local democracy on matters such as the running of the tube. Even at this late stage, I urge a radical rethink.

11.38 am

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): We are all most grateful to the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen) for, above all, his honesty, his candour and his willingness to face unpleasant realities. One such unpleasant reality has been demonstrated today, as the Jubilee line is closed from Waterloo northbound to Finchley Road. My constituents face such impediments daily. The frustrations of Londoners are legion, and hardly anything creates more frustration than the Government's total failure to modernise the underground system.

The Mayor's transport strategy put the alleviation of traffic congestion, especially in inner London, at the top of his list of priorities, and we are to have road-user charges, with all the pain and grief that they will impose. If he and the Government were to put the modernisation of the underground at the top of the list, Londoners and London's businesses would be most grateful. I appreciate everything that the hon. Gentleman said. The division of responsibilities, which is inherent in the operating companies and London Underground under the PPP model, is fatally, fundamentally and totally flawed. There has to be a clear chain of command from those who operate the service to those who have management responsibilities to those at a political level within the GLA who have the responsibility of laying down policy. If that model is pursued, the modernisation of the London underground is possible.

It is not necessarily a question of private sector involvement. What is necessary is effective political leadership from the Mayoralty, and support for the Mayoralty from Her Majesty's Government, instead of the consistent effort of Her Majesty's Government to undermine the Mayoralty for party-political reasons and out of sheer spite. The Government should have the magnanimity to acknowledge that the Mayor may be correct in choosing a professional to be transport

commissioner for London—most Londoners believe that he is correct in that judgment—and that the transport commissioner for London requires and deserves the support, at the very least, of Her Majesty's Government.

The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions seems to be more interested in looking into "Old Moore's Almanac" than listening to the voice of Londoners as expressed through the GLA and the Mayor. I am pleased that my party in its manifesto made it clear that it was unacceptable for the Government to maintain the division that they propose between the operating companies and London Underground.

I want to concentrate on the need for investment in the system, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned at the beginning of his speech, and to identify areas of investment that would benefit my constituents in north-west London and help the regeneration of London's economy by improving the transport system within the capital. Setting in place appropriate underground links to the fifth terminal at Heathrow should be at the top of the list.

The downturn in air transport is a temporary, understandable and tragic phenomenon, the causes of which we all understand. Civil air transport and its support is a matter of critical importance for the capital's economy. The fifth terminal at Heathrow must be built, and a Piccadilly line extension constructed. The Heathrow Express line must be extended also and, most important of all, Crossrail should get the go-ahead. The initiation of the Crossrail project from Reading and Heathrow out to the north-east and to Stansted, and down from Aylesbury, through Paddington and out of Stratford, would do more than almost any other project to revitalise public transport in London and free up the capital from the congestion that bedevils it today. That should be a priority for Her Majesty's Government, using public money. The City of London has said that it is possible for private finance to be obtained, which may be the case. However, London Underground should take the lead in supporting the Crossrail project.

There are also minor projects of particular importance to the west London economy. The Croxley link would extend the Metropolitan line beyond Northwood in my constituency up to Watford junction. At present, it is impossible for passengers coming from north-west London on the tube to go beyond the end of the tube at Watford. They then face a long journey on foot, by public transport or by taxi, to get to Watford junction and the railway network to the north-west and beyond. A small stretch of track is required, but the amelioration of transport problems in north-west London would be remarkable.

Likewise, it is necessary for a much better rail connection to be put in place between north-west London and Heathrow. A first step would be an extension of the tube from Ruislip Gardens on the Central line to Uxbridge and, I hope, beyond Uxbridge down to Heathrow. That, too, would be invaluable.

To set the proposals in perspective, the Government are minded to spend hundreds of millions of pounds to extend the channel link, under its second phase, eventually as far as St. Pancras. The current link to Waterloo may be slow, but it serves a part of London that is an equally important catchment area from the point of view of passengers. Now that the Jubilee line goes from north-west London all the way to Waterloo, there is no great problem for passengers in north and north-west London to reach Waterloo, the terminus. The money that is to be allocated to the second stage of the channel tunnel link would be much better spent on Crossrail and the improvements that I outlined. Again I thank the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead for his candour and for the service that he has done the House in obtaining this morning's debate.

**Mr. Frank Cook (in the Chair):** Order. I remind the House that in this slot on a Wednesday morning, we aim to start the winding-up speeches at 12 noon. I hope that those hon. Members seeking to catch my eye will bear that in mind.

11.46 am

**Sir Sydney Chapman** (Chipping Barnet): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen) on introducing this important debate for Londoners this morning. I welcome the new Minister and hope that he enjoys his poisoned chalice. I have particular affection for him because, as he will recall, we used to pair in what I now regard as the good old parliamentary days when the pairing system worked.

More than two thirds of Londoners now say that they receive poor value for money in using the London Underground. More than half the people who use the underground say that they receive a poor and unacceptable level of service. There is overcrowding and congestion, too many trains are terminated early and there are too many delays and breakdowns. As a London Member of Parliament, I have never received so many complaints as I have about London Transport, and London Underground in particular, over the past two years.

My constituency is at the end of the Northern line, which has been dubbed the misery line; although, in fairness, it now has new rolling stock that was ordered and built before 1997. Several of my constituents live near the end of the Piccadilly line, where the problem of the early termination of services at Arnos Grove, instead of Cockfosters, is especially prevalent.

The modernisation of London Underground requires a large and rapid investment, as we all know. However, sadly, that is the exact opposite of what is happening at the moment, as the front-page report in today's edition of *The Guardian*, to which the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead referred, spells out.

Despite what the Secretary of State said in the summer, Government support for London Underground has not substantially increased. According to *The Guardian* report, investment has been cut by 30 per cent. The Secretary of State claims the doubling of the grant, to £520 million, this year. I make two points. First, last year's investment by the Government of £267 million was a rock-bottom low, so it was a pretty low base from which to start. Secondly, I calculate that London Underground will be lucky if it receives only £400 million of that £520 million.

The Government have wasted the past four years and failed to deal with the urgent issues facing London Underground, which must either remain in the public

*[Sir Sydney Chapman]*

sector or be run by the private sector. Public-private partnership will achieve the worst of both worlds. The body that owns the assets must run the operations; the recent history of the running of public transport has taught us that lesson. Someone has to be held to account, but poor performance by the public part of the industry will be blamed on the private sector, and vice versa.

Complete privatisation would work if it was backed up by a good and unambiguous contract, but Londoners have made their choice. Parliament has established a Mayor, a new Greater London Authority, and Transport for London to run London Underground. My party accepts that. However, if I correctly judge the feelings of my constituents—which I think I do—they do not much care whether London Underground is in the public or the private sector. They want a safe, reliable and clean service with fares that are good value for money.

The Government must sort out their problems by joining up their policy with regard to public transport in London and by getting on with the job of providing a decent service to Londoners.

11.51 am

**Mr. Mark Field** (Cities of London and Westminster): I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Sir S. Chapman).

The subject under discussion is a Treasury-related matter, and I have some sympathy for the Minister. I am also aware that there are many bodies and individuals in place—such as the Mayor, Mr. Kiley and the Greater London Authority—which means that hon. Members are yet another layer of politicians involved in dealing with the problem; perhaps we interfere with it more than we help. However, our voices must be heard. My constituency contains the largest number of tube stations, most of which are stations of destination rather than departure.

Fundamental issues are at stake. Before 1 May 1997, the tube was not in a fantastic state, and it is important that my party acknowledges that. However, matters have only got worse since then. It appears that there is no strategy. In the Government's first term, the Deputy Prime Minister was the Secretary of State with responsibility for Transport. He constantly said that he wanted an integrated transport policy but did not do much about achieving it. The present Secretary of State lacks any credibility. An article in today's edition of *The Guardian* suggested that there was a cancer of cynicism in his Department; it will be difficult to cure, and I was concerned to read about the misleading statements that have been made.

London's infrastructure is falling apart; that is true with regard to not only the tube but the health and education services. A fundamental rethink is required and I hope that the debate can help to identify the problems. However, it is now up to the Treasury and the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions to try to make a difference.

I am particularly concerned about the matter because London—by which I mean my constituency and the other 74 London-related constituencies—earns much of the nation's wealth. However, despite the massive amount of wealth that London brings into the country, Londoners have to live with third world infrastructure, and there is no real strategy to improve it. The situation that Londoners have to put up with is unacceptable, especially when one considers the amount of money that is being pumped into other devolved regions, particularly Scotland. It is high time that the Chancellor—who, of course, does not represent his constituents in this place on many of these infrastructure-related matters—was made aware of that, because it is entirely unacceptable. There will be a massive political backlash—particularly because 55 out of the 74 London Members of Parliament are on the Government Benches—as this fact continues to be exposed.

I am also concerned about Crossrail, and I agree with the remarks of the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen). It is important that that is introduced; again, the Conservative Government put a stop to the proposals that were made in 1992-93. One of my greatest concerns is that any sign of an economic downturn in London will take the edge off demand for the transport infrastructure. The reductions may be only marginal—a 5 or 10 per cent. fall in numbers—but that might give the impression that things are not as bad as they have been in the past two or three years. That might be used as an excuse—the Treasury is considering paring off a lot of its financial commitments—for putting things on the backburner. That is particularly likely in the case of Crossrail, but it could also happen with some of the necessary investment in London Underground.

I appreciate that much of the matter is in the hands of Mr. Livingstone and Mr. Kiley, but the plans for a congestion charge, which affect my constituency more than virtually any other in the country, were predicated on the idea that there would be a demonstrable improvement in public transport. Since Mr. Livingstone's election, he has made it quite clear that the underground requires a decade or more of investment before such improvement can be achieved. He is absolutely right to identify that as the time frame. There will be no quick fix on the underground and it requires long-term investment. That investment must start now, because things are likely to get worse before they get better. If we do not have a strategy in place, things will go from bad to worse.

All of the emphasis is now on bus transport. This may be the only instance of the integrated policy to which the late, lamented Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions—the Deputy Prime Minister—referred. We cannot simply rely on buses. We can introduce bus lanes and improve bus services, but the idea that that can happen before January 2003, which—although I expect it to change—is still the expected start date for the congestion charge, will not prove realistic.

Bob Kiley was brought over from New York at great expense. Clearly, he has experience in this area, notwithstanding the rubbishing that one or two Government Ministers and advisers have tried to give him. He must be given the tools to do the job. I like to think that I speak on behalf of all 13 of the Conservative London Members of Parliament in saying that.

The whole issue of PPP and PFI-related projects is up in the air after the fiasco of Railtrack. I do not think that City financial institutions, other investors or even the employees of any of those future companies will feel that this is a sensible way forward. As a result, we must look to the Treasury to make a firm, and long overdue, commitment to the investment that is required. It has been required for more than a decade, although my party would obviously have to accept some responsibility for that.

The crying shame is that we have wasted four and a half years. Nothing has been achieved. There has been parroting of various slogans, but no real strategy has been put in place. This has been an interesting debate. London Members of Parliament should, in a sense, get off the stage, because we need to get the core decisions made in Government and then give Mr. Livingstone and Mr. Kiley the opportunity to get on and do the job.

11.59 am

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington): I welcome the opportunity to have this topical debate and, like other Members, I feel very sorry for the Minister. I understand why he has such a grim and determined expression on his face.

It is worth recapping what has happened in the past four years under London Underground and Government management. The hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Mr. Cohen) quoted from parliamentary answers that I obtained, which reveal a significant deterioration in services. Statistics reveal the extent of train delays of 15 minutes or more. Several lines have experienced significant increases in such delays over recent years. Significant increases in the length of time that people have to wait in queues for tickets are also occurring. Under the present management and the present Government, services are definitely deteriorating.

London Underground has spent £300,000 of our money on an advertising campaign. "Publicly run, privately built" was its slogan, which sounded suspiciously like a Labour party slogan to me. That campaign has now stopped and, "The quickest line to improvement" is its latest slogan. The advertising shows a pound sign at the end of the tunnel; precisely what the consortia will be interested in.

In response to the front page of today's edition of *The Guardian*, will the Minister place in the Library all correspondence between his Department and London Underground on the 2001-02 budget? Members can then judge for themselves whether the figure was nothing more than a bargaining ploy by the Government or a firm figure on which the Government have subsequently reneged. Will the Minister also confirm what safety imperatives will be cancelled or delayed as a result of the £30 million cut in the safety budget mentioned in *The Guardian* article?

What has been the Government's approach? They resorted to smear tactics in attacking Bob Kiley and we have received no apology from any Government spin doctor for that attack. Presumably the same Government spin doctors are currently spinning against London Underground because it made public its concerns about the proposed cut. It takes a peculiar spin on the Government's part to fall out both with Transport for London and with their own appointees, London Underground.

Some dubious claims have been made about the value for money of PPP. The Deputy Prime Minister stated in December 1999:

> "PPP is the right choice. It would save £4.5 billion".—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1999; Vol. 340, c. 847.]

The Minister for London spoke about

> "generating massive efficiencies in the tube investment programme over 15 years."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1999; Vol. 340, c. 930.]

However, we know from the report of the highly reputable Deloitte & Touche—a report that the Government tried but failed to suppress—that no value for money could be demonstrated in the first seven and a half years of the contract.

Does the Minister still anticipate a saving in the order of £4.5 billion, or anything remotely close to it? Following the Railtrack debacle, is he confident that £3 billion of private sector efficiencies can be achieved? Does he believe that PPP will generate the supposedly massive efficiency savings in the tube investment programme? Do the terms of the PPP contracts include specific figures on how little money winning bidders have to invest in London Underground? A proper amount should be stipulated as a minimum requirement for delivery.

A crucial issue is who will validate whether PPP represents value for money. At the Labour party conference, the Transport Secretary said that he would take his own independent advice. That is why I intervened on the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead to ask whether he thought that PricewaterhouseCoopers would be independent. That company has been adjusting the public sector comparator and making the bond issue look much worse than I, and others, think it is. One must question whether it is capable of giving independent, impartial advice to Ministers on whether public-private partnership represents value for money. Will the Minister confirm whether PricewaterhouseCoopers will be the independent advise?

There is so much uncertainty about whether PPP represents value for money that it is necessary, as other hon. Members have said, for bodies that are clearly independent of the Government, London Underground and PricewaterhouseCoopers to examine the question. It is for that reason that my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) will later today present a letter on our behalf to the new Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, who is due to be elected today. The letter will ask the PAC to examine the issue as a matter of urgency and to put pressure on the National Audit Office to consider PPP before, rather than after, contracts are signed. It will be no consolation to Londoners if, as the Transport Secretary said,

> "I will be held accountable for the decision and I will make it public and people can criticise me if they feel I have made the wrong decision."

That's all right, then. If PPP fails and the NAO finds that it does not represent value for money, we can all criticise the Transport Secretary. However, we would still have to live with PPP for the next 30 years.

There is one final reason why PPP should be stopped in its tracks. Many hon. Members have referred to it; Railtrack. The Transport Secretary said on Monday:

*[Tom Brake]*

"It was a company in crisis and came to the Government with a begging bowl month after month. It begged for taxpayers' money while handing out dividends to shareholders."

He also said:

"the Government are not here to fund the shareholders of private companies."—[*Official Report*, 15 October 2001; Vol. 372, c. 959.]

I can envisage a situation a few years hence—as I am sure can other hon. Members—in which the Transport Secretary's successor comes to the House to say similar things about the PPP project.

Finally, I ask the Minister to convey to the Secretary of State the following message. He had the courage to pull the plug on Railtrack. Will he now take decisive action against the Chancellor's pet project, PPP, and put it out of its misery?

12.7 pm

**Mr. Eric Pickles** (Brentwood and Ongar): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Harry Cohen) on what has been a timely and fortuitous debate on London Underground. He and several Members referred to Crossrail, and I should declare an interest. Crossrail will start about 300 yards from my bedroom window and, if it proves to be noisy, hon. Members should be sure that I will regularly report that back to them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) was right to talk about the need for a clear line of command for safety and investment. He was also right to point out that Mr. Kiley deserves our support. My hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Sir S. Chapman) spoke about the deteriorating reliability of the underground and about particular problems on the Northern and Piccadilly lines, and I support his comments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mr. Field) said that the network was not in a particularly good state when the Government came to power, at which point I saw the Minister scribbling away. However, he should remember that since the war, the only bumper time for the London underground was in the first two years of Mr. Major's Government. The facts speak for themselves. However, that level of public investment was unsustainable and there has been a gradual downturn in investment since then. Most of the London underground is 150 years old. More worryingly, we should also realise that no one has a real idea of the state of the tunnels on the underground, a fact that Mr. Kiley candidly volunteered to me in a meeting a couple of weeks ago.

Capacity on the underground is severely limited. There is much talk about shifts from the road to the underground, but there is virtually no capacity for significant increase. My hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster rightly talked about a possible world recession, but this is none the less an ideal time to press ahead with improvements in the rail network and the underground. That might give us a few valuable years of breathing space to get those projects under way before there is an inevitable increase in capacity.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) talked about the new displays on the underground that show a pound at the end of the tunnel, representing valuable investment money floating away from the underground. They demonstrate more honesty than the spin doctors.

Thanks to *The Guardian*, we now know that despite the Government's promises a few weeks ago—they trumpeted a vast increase in the money available for the underground—their so-called increase actually represents a 30 per cent. decrease. I find myself in a position that I would not have believed any Conservative spokesman would be in; I am almost tempted to table an early-day motion demanding the return of the Deputy Prime Minister to his former transport role.

**Mr. Field:** It is not that bad.

**Mr. Pickles:** I think it is. Messages should be sent to Ukraine, where I understand the Deputy Prime Minister is in negotiations—

**Mr. Field:** For political asylum?

**Mr. Pickles:** I am sure that it is not for that. The Deputy Prime Minister should return immediately because he had the clout. We know from talking to London Underground officials that firm promises were made for £775 million of investment. They were shocked to find that a press release from the present Secretary of State claimed that they would receive considerably less—30 per cent.—and that that sum was heralded as some kind of triumph. The cut means a £30 million cut in safety improvement, a £16 million cut in the maintenance of lifts and escalators, a £72 million cut in the upkeep of stations and a £34 million cut in infrastructure. The backlog of repairs and maintenance now stands at the princely sum of £1.2 billion. There is a paradox in that because the amount of money put aside to set up the PPP—perhaps the Minister would give us the exact figure; we are certainly talking about hundreds of millions of pounds—would otherwise be available for improvements.

We need a clear grasp of how important the underground is in terms of moving passengers about. The City of London has a 92 per cent. commuter intake, larger than any other city in the world. The underground carries 3 million passengers a day, roughly the equivalent of the railway network for the whole of the United Kingdom. However, it is old and outmoded. As the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington said, the number of signals passed at danger increases as funding for the rail network decreases. Punctuality is decreasing. There is a suggestion—I hope that the Minister will refute it—that we are seeing before and after shots; that the Government are following a deliberate policy of running down investment in the underground to show clearly some great benefit after PPP comes in. If that were the case, it would be a scandal. The Minister is scowling, and I am sure that he will refute that argument.

It needs to be stated clearly that, even with PPP, the money generated by fares will not be sufficient to guarantee improvements to the infrastructure. It will not even be sufficient to deal with the basic safety

requirements. The success of the underground will be determined by the level of state subsidy. That will play a significant part because of the way in which the PPP is structured; there is no getting away from it. The Government could do to the underground what they did to Railtrack; turn off the resources and make the company go bust. Those people who are thinking of investing in PPP will have the image of a Secretary of State deliberately destroying a company very much in their minds before they make that investment.

The hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead was particularly courageous to refer, as did Opposition Members, to the regrettable and unfortunate incident involving the Secretary of State's spin doctor. The hon. Gentleman was quite right; she should go. The staged apology yesterday was ill-timed and ill-considered—particularly in its failure to address the families of those who died—and made matters considerably worse. My principal concern is not only that the disgusting e-mail was sent; what seems to be forgotten is that the Government acted on it. The various consultation documents that they later suggested should be put out were, indeed, put out.

**Mr. Edward Davey:** Is the hon. Gentleman not even more concerned about the way in which the director of communications at the Department was treated—we are told—by the Secretary of State himself?

**Mr. Pickles:** That relates directly to the underground. We must remember that the way in which Mr. Evans was dealt with was connected to the Parsons Brinckerhoff report about safety on the underground. Ms Moore saw a possibility that the report might be regarded as unfavourable and thought it appropriate to send out information about Mr. Kiley, an honoured and dedicated public servant. That should not surprise us. This is the woman who saw the destruction of the twin towers as a good way to get out bad news about councillors' pensions and who tried to deny and defer information on the safety of the railways.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** My hon. Friend is making an important constitutional point. Has it not always been the tradition that Her Majesty's Ministers are answerable personally for the conduct of public servants in their Department? It is a preposterous notion that a public servant should appear on television to try to exculpate herself. The Secretary of State himself must take responsibility, and he ought to resign.

**Mr. Pickles:** Indeed. I have called for the Secretary of State to resign. He does not seem to realise the seriousness of the situation. The Opposition parties have stopped the normal criticism of Government to offer support in these difficult times. There is an obligation on the Government to keep their own house in order and to accept responsibility for that despicable e-mail. It certainly leaves us all with a bad taste in our mouths, which is not good as we move on to the next stage—trying to ensure that sufficient investment goes into London Underground. I am afraid that the Secretary of State has been looked upon, weighed in the balance and found wanting on this important issue.

12.20 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Mr. David Jamieson):** First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead (Mr. Cohen) on securing this important debate. A number of hon. Members have commiserated with me on my task. I can assure them that I am pleased to have this job and to respond to the debate. The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) said that I had a grim expression on my face. I can assure him that it was a happy expression; any grim expression may have been in anticipation of what he had to say.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on the sensible and courteous manner in which he conducted the debate and on his characteristically robust presentation. I also congratulate him on his perseverance, both in tabling questions to me and the Department and in writing to the Department. He has been a serious player. I congratulate him on the way in which he has robustly taken up matters on behalf of his constituents. That may not always be convenient or comfortable for the Government, but it is important that people do as he has done.

I agree with my hon. Friend right from the outset. He says that we want an underground system that gives value for money and accountability. We want something else, too. His constituents and those who use the tube—I use it regularly, both in my ministerial capacity and privately—want it to be safe, clean and reliable. That is what we will deliver. I hope that my praise for my hon. Friend has done less damage than his praise for me. I cannot cover all the points in the time available. However, as always, if there are points that he or others feel we have not covered sufficiently I shall be happy to deal with them in writing.

A number of hon. Members referred to one of the Department's press officers. My hon. Friend quite rightly said that she should be condemned. It was also right for her to apologise yesterday. This debate, however, and the ongoing debate, should be about the issues and not about the personalities. I intend to move on to the issues. Before I attempt to answer some of the points in the debate, it is important to set my response in context.

I welcome the debate today. London Underground is a vital national asset. The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) gave some of the figures. We need to get a clear grasp of the value of the underground, which carries 3 million passengers a day and is essential for the functioning of London as one of the great cities of the world. But for too long, London Underground has suffered from a lack of investment. It struggles to run a 21st century service with old and outdated equipment.

We recognised those problems when we first came to power. It was clear that to make the fundamental changes needed to secure the long-term future of the tube would take time. But the underground's needs were urgent. Some may have forgotten—those involved in trying to make the improvements to the tube need to remember—that the previous Government's spending plans would have seen investment fall to £160 million and beyond that to zero. We reversed those cuts.

*[Mr. David Jamieson]*

An additional £365 million of funding for London Underground was made available in March 1998. Another £517 million over two years was announced in July 1999. In our first term as a whole, the Government provided the underground with almost £1 billion more in grant than the Tories planned. It is important to get those figures on the record. We are providing another £520 million of grant this year, almost double the amount available last year. We will continue to provide the additional resources needed to keep the underground from getting worse and to make a start on the vital improvements needed.

**Mr. Pickles:** Does the Minister think that it was wrong that a senior London Underground manager told the *Evening Standard* that the Government were resorting to old-fashioned hypocrisy by announcing with a fanfare that they were doubling the money this year?

**Mr. Jamieson:** The old-fashioned hypocrisy may be coming from the Opposition, not the Government. I shall come to funding in a moment.

It is clear that even Government grant year on year could never be enough to achieve the faster, cleaner and more reliable service that the constituents of the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead want. We cannot build a better system by just throwing money at the problem, whether that money comes from taxpayers or from issuing bonds. The tube needs new life and a new structure to ensure that the money that we put in is well spent and delivers the service that we want.

It has been suggested that the Government are taking a dogmatic approach to the matter, but that is not the case. The tube modernisation plans are not the creation of an official hidden away in an obscure corner of the Treasury; they are the result of a huge amount of careful thought by expert advisers and, most important, by the people in London Underground, who really know how the tube works. They know the system inside out and know the real problems.

The Government ruled out privatisation at an early stage, contrary to some claims. We passionately believe in quality public services; it is often forgotten that we looked at all the options for the best way to modernise the tube. When the Deputy Prime Minister announced our approach, he published a document setting out the options we considered, including the use of bonds, a trust and a joint venture. The tube runs intensive services and the operation of the tube lines need to be co-ordinated, with signals, trains and stations managed together in real time. That is why we insisted on keeping all aspects of the tube operation firmly in the public sector.

It was necessary to change the management of the investment to upgrade the infrastructure and to avoid past problems of projects being late and over budget. My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead referred to the Jubilee line being over budget and out of control. We had to avoid such mistakes because we wanted to ensure that the money that went in would provide the service and give the value that passengers wanted. We needed a new solution to help to fix that infrastructure.

The underground needs a new way to manage investment, to ensure that improvements are carried out on time and, most important, on budget, and to ensure that essential maintenance work is not overlooked.

My hon. Friend mentioned the £2 billion overrun—as he called it—of the Jubilee line extension, which we do not want to be replicated in the future. I am glad that he asked a proper question about private profits from the infracos. Those companies will make a profit only if they deliver a punctual, quality service that provides value for money according to the contract negotiated with London Underground. If they do so, and meet the new high standards, they will be able to make a profit as private companies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead asked about the railway inspectorate. A report is expected shortly, certainly before Christmas; we hope it will be next month. My hon. Friend asked whether the contracts would be in the public domain; we have put the criteria that we are using to draw up the contracts in the public domain, but my hon. Friend will appreciate that much of the commercially confidential material cannot be released. There have been comments from various sources about the £775 million; that was an expectation of London Underground, which said in its press release yesterday:

"It is not unusual for us to receive less than we ask for."

I have been allowed very little time to respond to the many important issues raised by today's debate. There are many matters that Members will want to take further. If they would care to indicate them in correspondence or otherwise, I should be happy to take them forward. This is an important debate about a matter of great substance. I am glad that we have had an opportunity to air some of the issues today.

## Grantham Hospital

12.30 pm

**Mr. Quentin Davies** (Grantham and Stamford): I am grateful to both you and Mr. Speaker for giving me this debate, Mr. Winterton. It is an opportunity— *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton (in the Chair):** Order. Will those leaving the Chamber please be quiet and leave quickly?

**Mr. Davies:** These new debates have provided an opportunity to bring to the attention of both the House and the Government a matter of the greatest concern to myself, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg), my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Patrick Mercer), who would be here but for his being away with a defence committee, and to all our constituents, including the mayor of Grantham.

The debate concerns the future of a general hospital, Grantham hospital, which has served the people of Grantham and its surrounding areas, including Newark, Sleaford and many villages, for generations. Until 1998, the hospital had a full range of services including paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics. With your knowledge of the health service, Mr.Winterton, you will be the first to agree that those are three important specialties in any general hospital.

The paediatric facility had been supplied for many years by a contract with the Queens medical centre in Nottingham. That worked perfectly well, providing a full range of paediatric services including neo-natal back-up to the obstetrics service. In the summer of 1998, Lincolnshire health authority decided to set up a new ambulatory paediatrics service in Lincolnshire. It announced to the Queens medical centre that in future all it would be required to deliver on its contract would be the neo-natal back-up for emergency deliveries, which are, of course, exceedingly rare in the course of a year, requiring the immediate attention of a paediatrician. Lincolnshire health authority must have known that that would result in the Queens medical centre saying that it could no longer go on supplying paediatricians to be used once or twice a month. It was a ridiculous suggestion and the Queens medical centre was unable to renew the contract.

Lincolnshire health authority deliberately made no alternative provision. As a result, the viability of the obstetrics department was undermined, which provided the health authority with a wonderful excuse to withdraw gynaecology and obstetrics consultants from Grantham hospital. I use the word "excuse" advisedly. It was clear at the time that they knew the consequences of what they were doing. We found that out in the most dramatic fashion when, at a meeting of the health authority, which was supposedly going to take a decision on the future of the specialties in Grantham hospital, it was discovered that Lincolnshire health authority had already spent money on expanding the maternity facilities in Lincoln before the decision had been made. That was a clear breach of due process to which I drew attention at the time. Had we had the funds, we would certainly have pursued the matter under judicial review. What is more, the Government, who knew perfectly well what was going on, did not intervene, as they should have done, at this clear breach of due process. It is obvious that they were complicit in the manoeuvre whereby those vital specialists were removed from Grantham hospital. That caused great concern and agitation in Grantham and its surrounding towns and villages. In all, 100,000 people depended on the facilities in Grantham hospital.

Several proposals were made to save those services. I should like to pay tribute to Mr. Voght, one of the consultant gynaecologists and obstetricians in Grantham hospital, who produced several proposals under which it would have been possible for consultant gynaecologists and obstetricians to continue to operate in the hospital, but the Government rejected them all.

Of course, I immediately took the issue up with a series of Ministers. First, I contacted the then Secretary of State for Health, the right hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I had meetings with him both privately and accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend and by the then hon. Member for Newark. I took a deputation of local citizens, including many interested groups and local authority leaders of all three parties, to see the right hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras on 1 September 1998, when we received a promise that the royal colleges would be instructed to look at the matter and to make urgent proposals on the future of maternity services in Grantham hospital.

The right hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras was then replaced as Secretary of State by the right hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), who continued to maintain that promise. I pursued him on several occasions—for example, in February and April 1999—and was always told that the report was about to appear. It never has, and it has now been revealed by the Minister for Public Health, who is not here today because she is on maternity leave, that the promise has been—to use her words, which I believe are in the new spin-doctor language—"overtaken by events". In other words, the promise has been breached.

From spring 1999, the right hon. Member for Darlington, who evidently had little taste for the issue and was perhaps deeply embarrassed by it, decided to pass the whole matter over to his deputy, the Minister for Public Health, who has displayed in her handling of the matter a lack of interest and commitment and a lackadaisical and disorganised approach to her work such as I have not previously witnessed in my dealings with Ministers in Governments of either party. On one occasion, she took a year to respond to one of my letters. I eventually received a grovelling written apology from the permanent secretary and chief executive of the national health service, Mr. Nigel Crisp, apologising for the behaviour of his Minister: a pretty extraordinary state of affairs. Her letter, which I am happy to make available to anyone who wishes it, is dated 16 May 2000. That gives a flavour of the way in which we have been treated by the Government.

Naturally, I continued to pursue the matter. I arranged a meeting with the Minister for Public Health on 1 March 2001, when I received her assurance that she would institute an inquiry into the future of maternity services in Grantham, apart and aside from any national investigations or inquiries relating to royal colleges about the future of maternity services in the national

*[Mr. Davies]*

health service, because she accepted that the matter of Grantham was of sufficient urgency. I recorded that in a letter to her dated 9 April. I received no written confirmation from her of the promise or of any moves to set up the inquiry. My secretary and research assistant pursued her office and on 10 May received a promise that we would definitely hear something from her before the dissolution of Parliament. We did not. One may ask why the Government did not wish to give me a discouraging response on the eve of the election campaign, but I will leave that open to speculation.

I finally received a reply to my letter of 9 April on 20 September, which represented a considerable improvement in the hon. Lady's performance. The delay in her dealing with her correspondence has evidently come down from 12 months to six months, so I suppose that we should be grateful for that. The letter said that the original promise that I was given by the right hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras had been, to repeat her phrase, "overtaken by events" and that her own undertaking on 1 March no longer applied. The letter was full of gobbledegook saying that there would be all sorts of studies of all kinds of maternity and obstetric issues in the national health service and that over the long term the future of Grantham hospital would have to be considered in the light of those. I have no time to quote the letter, but I will make it available to the press and any other interested party. It makes depressing, but revealing, reading.

This is a history of avoidance and evasion of fundamental responsibility and of trying to fob off the people of Grantham. However, the really vital issue that we should be focusing on today is the actual consequence of removing those facilities from Grantham hospital.

I am afraid that the consequence has been what was predicted by myself and many others, including the general practitioners of Grantham to a man and to a woman, Mr. Voght and other doctors and specialists in Grantham hospital: a whole series of tragedies. We have lost lives. Babies have died. Children have died who quite evidently would not have done had the proper facilities, such as are usually expected to be present in a general hospital worthy of the name, still been in place.

The nearest obstetric, gynaecology and 24-hour paediatric facilities are now located in general hospitals all more than an hour away by road. One is on the other side of Nottingham, one on the other side of Lincoln and another on the other side of Boston. That is the position that we face. We now have a series of calls on the ambulance service to take emergency cases to those three hospitals. Imagine what it is like to have a haemorrhage and be on a bumpy road in an ambulance hoping to get to a general hospital in time.

It is always difficult to be certain in each individual case whether a fatality would have occurred had the facilities still been available in Grantham, but there are a number of cases in which there is little doubt. One is that of a poor little three-year-old called Tyler Foster. In March 2000 he was sent to three hospitals before he died. He was first admitted to Grantham, but because there was no paediatrician there he was shipped to Boston. Having gone 30 miles to the east he was then shipped 30 miles to the west, to Nottingham, where he died of meningitis. Usually, if that is diagnosed in time and treated with antibiotics, the prognosis is favourable. He was sent to three different departments in search of the paediatricians who should have been present in Grantham, and would have been before 1998.

Another case was that of Olivia Gonzales in October 2000. She was born with a blood incompatibility and rapidly developed jaundice. Again, the proper facilities were not there and she died from a condition the outcome of which, in the general medical view, is usually satisfactory as long as it is treated in time. By the time she got to Lincoln hospital, it was too late.

Just a week ago was the case of Georgia Adelle Sewards, which I will dwell on for a second, as it was so recent. I have been authorised by her grandmother to read from the tragic letter that I have received. It is dated 15 October 2001.

"Last Thursday, my daughter Keely had a stillborn baby after only being 22 weeks pregnant. She started bleeding on Monday and it took 4 doctors to see her before she was admitted to Lincoln Hospital where the baby was still born in the early hours of Thursday morning."

She had been taken from Grantham to Lincoln.

"Had Grantham been open I am sure that she would have been referred there straight away or if she hadn't, I would have took her there myself...No words can express the heartache this has caused the whole family. The lack of facilities at Grantham could have made a difference I feel sure. Surely no amount of money is worth the cost of human life, even one so young."

**Mr. Douglas Hogg** (Sleaford and North Hykeham): Will my hon. Friend accept my congratulations on having secured this Adjournment debate? My constituents who live in Sleaford and in the adjoining villages around Grantham and Sleaford would endorse the criticisms and anxieties that he has expressed on behalf of his own constituents in Grantham.

**Mr. Davies:** I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend, who has spoken well this morning. His constituents and mine look to us, above anything else that we do in this House at the present time in national or even international politics, to try to ensure that those essential facilities are restored to Grantham hospital.

There have been fatalities. I asked for a public inquiry into the case of Olivia Gonzales, but of course, the Government have not given it to me. Perhaps they would be embarrassed about what it would reveal. Many others have demanded public inquiries into fatalities. Even in cases where people have survived, the situation that has been revealed is utterly unacceptable. One poor lady—I have been unable to contact her, so do not have consent to use her name, but the Government know about the case—had a haemorrhage in Bracebridge Heath, in my right hon. and learned Friend's constituency, in an ambulance rushing to Lincoln county hospital. She survived, but she could easily have not.

I shall read another account, from *The Journal* of 22 October 1999, which is just one of many that have been published in that Grantham paper:

"A pregnant woman's life was saved at Grantham Hospital when an ambulance crew decided she would not survive a 30-mile blue light trip to Lincoln.

The unnamed woman was bleeding heavily when the ambulance heading for Lincoln County Hospital obstetrics unit turned round to go to Grantham accident and emergency.

Following a life-saving operation last Wednesday, the woman was detained overnight and then transferred to Lincoln...

'A general surgeon agreed to perform a life-saving operation.'

Normally, any emergency operation on a pregnant woman would be carried out by a consultant gynaecologist and obstetrician."

We should pay tribute to that general surgeon, who was prepared to take the personal professional risk of intervening in a case that was beyond his specialty. Thank God he did—he saved somebody's life. However, he was put in that position by the decision to take away those consultants from Grantham hospital. Let no one be in any doubt about that.

I am authorised to quote from the following letter, which I received from a constituent of mine on 23 March:

"On 17 February this year, I gave birth to my third baby...Unfortunately, he was very poorly and grossly anaemic with a condition known as 'chronic foetal maternal transfusion'. So pale, cold and lifeless he could not support himself and would have collapsed without an immediate blood transfusion. Due to the lack of services at Grantham we had to be rushed to Lincoln county hospital. The journey to Lincoln was very stressful and upsetting—not to mention uncomfortable for a newly delivered mum. It was very bumpy in the ambulance for all of us. Also traumatic having the siren blue lights going with my new-born in such a lifeless state. More than once three of us had to hold the baby's incubator steady as it was jolted about inside the speeding vehicle."

If that is not a graphic description of the situation in Grantham hospital, I do not know what is. I am authorised to mention the name of the lady concerned—it is Jayne Saunders.

I think that I have said enough to give a sense of the dramatic importance of this issue to the lives of people in Grantham now, and to the birth of future generations. Everyone in Grantham who expects to have a child at some time is extremely concerned about the absence of proper facilities. Every woman can legitimately be worried about the absence of gynaecological consultants. All manner of complications can emerge through the use of general surgery and accident and emergency facilities that have no gynaecological specialists or paediatricians. Women and children account for more than half the human race. How can a general hospital that is deprived of those essential facilities be called a general hospital?

This appalling situation has been made even worse by the Government's history of prevarication, equivocation and simple delay in even addressing the matter. They have tried every possible bureaucratic subterfuge to get rid of me, delay matters, find excuses and evade their responsibility. That cannot go on, which is why I have initiated today's debate. The Government must decide now whether they are going to bring back those consultants to Grantham hospital, or take the terrible responsibility for the consequences of not doing so.

12.48 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ms Hazel Blears):** I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Mr. Davies) on securing today's extremely important debate on the future of Grantham and District hospital. My ministerial colleagues and I are aware of local concerns about the current and future level of services provided by the hospital. We are all aware of the passion and commitment of the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. and learned Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Mr. Hogg) on their constituents' behalf. It is clear that these issues are of great concern to the entire community, and I understand how strongly the hon. Gentleman feels about the level of health services for his constituents.

Changes to those services have been the subject of considerable debate for a long time. The initial changes were introduced for reasons of clinical safety, and I intend to talk about them in a little more detail in order to set the future context for some of them.

**Mr. Davies:** The Government have made that contention—falsely—before. Before she falls into a trap of her own bureaucrats' making, I should tell the hon. Lady that there were no complaints whatever about the viability of services in Grantham hospital as they existed until summer 1998. There were no complaints from the royal colleges; nor did anyone else suggest that it was unsafe to continue with the existing structure. A decision was taken to change the structure and remove the consultants, and our problems derived from that.

**Ms Blears:** I understand that that is the hon. Gentleman's view of the situation. Rather than fall into a bureaucratic trap, I assure him that I am familiar with similar circumstances relating to accreditation, training, throughput and volume, the views of the royal colleges about those issues and how often they conflict with the perceived needs of communities. I understand the difficulties of drawing balances. Those are difficult issues for communities, Governments and clinicians to resolve.

As the hon. Gentleman stated, he has pursued this matter for a long time. I am aware that he had a meeting with the former Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who said that the Grantham area needed a substantial hospital to meet the needs of local people and take advantage of technology changes and new services developing that may make it easier to provide higher quality services in future. That commitment existed then and exists now. There is no threat to the future of Grantham hospital as a district general hospital in that community.

The hon. Gentleman outlined the issue in depth and detail, and his intimate knowledge of it enables him to take us quickly through the history of the services. It is a long and complex history and, sadly for many people, the hospital will always be associated with the terrible events of the early 1990s relating to Beverly Allitt and the consequent review of paediatric services. At that time, a number of clinical concerns were expressed about the safety of paediatric services at the hospital—limited scope for clinical experience; low work load; professional isolation; and limited capacity to deal with complex problems. It is not true to say that those matters came out of thin air, they happened as a result of concerns about paediatric quality following the dreadful events related to Beverly Allitt.

**Mr. Davies:** This is getting worse. The hon. Lady is taking refuge in complete irrelevance. I already

*[Mr. Davies]*

mentioned that the Beverly Allitt case resulted in a contract being placed with Queens medical centre to provide paediatric care and facilities. That worked extremely well and satisfactorily, there was no problem and the royal colleges were happy with it. The Government, or the health authority on the Government's instruction, pulled the rug from under that structure. Returning to what happened in the 1960s and 1970s is irrelevant. In the limited time that we have, we must focus on the central issue: will the Government bring back those consultants or not?

**Ms Blears:** It is important to explain that it was not a matter in which, in the hon. Gentleman's words, the Government were "complicit in the manoeuvre." The proposals arose from a set of circumstances that raised genuine clinical concerns about safety. After the service had been taken over by the Queens medical centre, concerns surfaced again about low volume and throughput that had significant implications for medical training and the safety of those services. The paediatric service was withdrawn in August 1998 and at that time the community health council did not object, so it was not a matter placed before Ministers. The ambulatory service was developed and the local community health council gave its full support to that model; there was therefore no need for any further decision to be made.

Those changes to paediatrics raised concerns about the sustainability of clinically safe obstetric and gynaecology services and it was considered that, without a 24-hour consultant-led paediatric service, the delivery of high-risk babies would be clinically unsafe. That was made clear in the original consultation on the changes in paediatrics.

In respect of the proposals on obstetrics and gynaecology, the community health council objected to them and there remains an outstanding reference to Ministers about the objection, which needs to be formally decided upon. A midwife delivery unit was then established that has now been formally evaluated by the NHS office and Nottingham university. It is important to reassure local women that delivery results at the midwife unit are extremely satisfactory: some 91 per cent. of people are satisfied with the service. There is no evidence of increased mortality at the midwife-led unit. It is important to have that on record because local people and their families would be concerned at the prospect of lower clinical standards. Standards in the midwifery unit are satisfactory and clinicians who thought that standards might deteriorate have publicly acknowledged that that is not so.

My ministerial colleagues have established a review to consider whether the midwifery unit can begin to expand its activities geographically and in terms of the sort of pregnant women it can take under its auspices. The unit has been recognised as doing excellent work and may be able to do more work for local people.

It is important to respond to the hon. Gentleman's point about the royal colleges' review. My ministerial colleague's letter to him stated that it had been overtaken by events, but that was not to avoid dealing with the issue. A number of national reviews of maternity services are taking place to try to ensure that we provide the best high-quality and consistent service throughout the country. There is to be huge investment, as the hon. Gentleman knows from the extra finance that was announced this week for maternity services. The national service framework for children, which will include maternity services, is trying to set top-quality standards. We want to examine Grantham in the context of that national review so that there is a prospect of providing high-quality services for local people.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's frustration that the national review, the work force review and the national service framework may sound like NHS gobbledegook, but we are making a genuine attempt to put in place, for the first time, a national entitlement for everyone, wherever they are in the country, to receive high standards of care. It would be easy to make decisions about Grantham now outside the context of that wider review. However, keeping the objection open, which the community health council has lodged, means that a decision will have to be made. Making a decision about Grantham in the wider context of the national review is harder in many ways than reaching an immediate decision on the basis of information that we have now. The review may come up with further information that enables us to examine the situation in Grantham more closely in the future.

**Mr. Davies:** I do not underestimate the capacity of the review to provide further excuses for more delays by the Government. The hon. Lady now has three minutes in which to answer my questions. Will she make a decision? Will she deal with the formal objection? If she does not intend to do so today, when will she give us an answer? Will it be after the next election?

**Ms Blears:** I understand that the review group hopes to report by the end of the year and to send reports on its national consideration to Ministers by April 2002. That is the framework to which we are working.

It is right that I should refer to specific cases raised by the hon. Gentleman. I did not intend to do so, but as he has raised them, it is important to comment on them. The two cases of which I am aware—Tyler Foster and Olivia Gonzales—are tragic. It is important to say that Tyler Foster had meningitis and, as many people know, meningitis can deteriorate dramatically quickly. Tyler was transferred to Pilgrim hospital, Boston and then to the paediatric intensive care unit at Queen's medical centre, Nottingham. There have never been paediatric intensive care facilities at Grantham, so the transfer would have had to be made in any event. I also understand that there has been a full report on that case and that there is no evidence that, had he been transferred to the paediatric intensive care unit sooner, the outcome would have been any different.

**Mr. Davies:** May I point out the geography of Lincolnshire? Boston is 30 miles in one direction, Nottingham is 30 miles in another direction. The poor child was sent in one direction and then 60 miles in the opposite direction.

**Ms Blears:** In the case of Olivia Gonzales, the transfers took place as they would have done in any event. There is no evidence that the unfortunate death of that child could have been avoided by the existence of a

consultant-led service. The hon. Gentleman said that it is very difficult to decide in individual cases where the provision of services would be.

In relation to the current reviews, the national review and the decisions to be made in Grantham in that context, it would be inappropriate and wasteful now to hold a separate public inquiry. However, it is important that the objection from the community health council remains. Ministers will have to take a decision about Grantham, but it will be better informed, in relation to the work currently being done on maternity services. The hon. Gentleman has raised some important issues about the connection between paediatrics and obstetrics. Those issues need to be closely examined and I am grateful to him for bringing them to our attention.

## National Lottery

1 pm

**Mr. Colin Challen** (Morley and Rothwell): I am grateful for the opportunity for this debate, which comes at an opportune time.

Someone once said that if life was fair, Elvis would be alive and all his impersonators would be dead. I am reminded of that remark as I make my first Adjournment debate speech, on the subject of the national lottery. Perhaps it is a philosophical question whether something called a lottery should be expected to be fair; you pays your money and you takes your chances. The trouble is, I cannot let the matter pass as easily as that. Some constituencies contribute more than their fair share in the purchase of lottery tickets and scratch cards, compared with what they get back in lottery grants to their local good causes. Let me not beat about the bush; mine is such a constituency.

Since the inception of the national lottery, my constituency has spent well over £40 million on it and currently ranks at 253rd out of 659 on that score. However, where are we when it comes to getting money for good causes? According to Library figures, to the end of June this year we came 654th out of 659 constituencies for grants to good causes. However, mine is by no means the worst case and I am pleased to see in the Chamber one or two hon. Members who represent other such constituencies. The lowest-ranked recipient is Denton and Reddish, which ranked 255th in the purchasing of tickets. Poor old Hayes and Harlington was in the top 50 payers but came second from bottom in what it got out of the lottery.

By June this year, Morley and Rothwell had received just £814,000 in the whole of the six years since the lottery started. The average for a constituency was £14,086,000 nationally. Of course, the average is somewhat inflated by the fact that some constituencies contain locations such as city centres where applicants for geographically widespread awards are based. Alternatively, they may have nationally prestigious and widely acclaimed projects within their borders, such as the dome in Greenwich and Woolwich, which came top of the list with more than £672 million. However, even if we removed that factor from our reckoning, I doubt very much whether it would result in a ratio better than 10 to 1 between the average awards and those given to the bottom dozen or so.

I am pleased that the Government announced, earlier in the year, that they intended to tackle that appalling deficit in the worst-off areas by creating a £150 million fund called "communities first", which, starting next April, will channel money to areas that are deprived or that have received less than their fair share of lottery funds. What constitutes an area for the purpose of this scheme is yet to be announced. Will it be a county, a city, a constituency or a district? If communities are being considered, in my view only one definition of an area will suffice—a constituency.

In a city the size of Leeds, of which my constituency is a part, there are many communities, some of them fiercely proud of their local traditions and identities. It would be wrong to lump them all together, so this is my first plea: if we are interested in communities first, let us ensure that the communities first fund tackles its remit at the lowest possible level—that of the constituency.

*[Mr. Colin Challen]*

However, I do not want to focus entirely on the new fund. If it receives all our attention, we may, by default, miss out on all the other lottery funding streams, yet still imagine that our problem has been solved. The whole ethos has to change. With the declining sales in lottery tickets, it is clear that fewer large awards will be made. The emphasis now is on many smaller awards. In that sense, therefore, it is even more unlikely that we at the bottom will be able to catch up.

I come now to some of the obstacles that are placed in the way of successful applications. A highly respected charity in my constituency has been turned down for grants on four occasions. The most recent disappointment was with regard to its application to the community fund's poverty and disadvantage programme to tackle issues on one of the most problematic housing estates in my constituency. The charity employs professional fundraisers. Their applications are not made lightly or without very serious attention to detail. It seems that the fundraisers have been refused because of some missing details. If that is the case, why were they not asked to fill in the alleged gaps rather than being refused and told to start all over again?

Another reason for the charity being turned down was that its board was not considered representative enough of the community. That was despite the fact that the charity's board was necessarily constituted to reflect the institutional arrangements with some of its key funding bodies, such as the local authority, which meant that such arrangements would be difficult to alter. I am not a fan of the phrase "politically correct", but there seems to have been a politically correct pretext for turning down bids that had not been exercised thoughtfully.

Since being elected to Parliament in June, I have been campaigning in my constituency to raise awareness of our poor record in receiving grants. I have no doubt that if we applied for more money, we would receive more money. However, we must first develop our capacity to make good applications. I visited one local charity that desperately needed to improve its accommodation. The only person who was really interested in performing the role of applicant was the charity's septuagenarian secretary. Unfortunately, he died before a successful bid could be made. The organisation has since folded, even though it served many local people and provided a heart for the community.

The problem is that organisations need capacity building before they can do anything and those in deprived areas are most likely to lack capacity. There may be no easy access to the services of solicitors, accountants or other professionals who could help such organisations with complex applications. Volunteers in the community who have such skills may already be overstretched. Has any research been commissioned into the matter?

I come now to my second plea. If we seriously want to ensure that lottery money goes to the areas that have missed out on it before, we must analyse why that has happened, learn the lessons and take active steps to remedy the problem. Such steps must include providing training as well as having lottery funding officials meeting groups and assisting them. At a meeting in my constituency, they did just that. It was useful to have experts on hand to answer specific questions. We must ensure that that happens regularly. It should not have to be the local Member of Parliament who initiates such activity. We must also ask whether enough time is given to the application appraisal process. What is the average time given to reading, checking and analysing applications? Is it 20 minutes or half an hour? In some cases, the process may be too summary. What I have sought so far might help the problem, but I know that only marginal improvements can be made to our local success rate. Turning the tanker around will take a long time and, after six years, that is too long a time to wait.

I come now to my third plea. A ring-fenced sum from the communities first fund should be reserved for the bottom dozen or so constituencies, which have received less than 10 per cent. of the average amount given nationally to constituencies. Even if that ring-fenced sum were aimed at ensuring that each of the constituencies received only £1 million each, thereby doubling what they had received in the previous six years, it would still be less than 10 per cent. of the entire value of the communities first fund.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes** (Doncaster, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene. As he knows, my constituency—like his own—has received less than £1 million, although it has paid into the lottery a great deal more than that. His idea of targeted funding is excellent, but is he not being a little too modest? Is he aware that other targeted funding such as "Brass for Barnsley" was more than £3 million? Perhaps we should have funding along the lines of "Money for Morley" and "Dosh for Doncaster". That should be more than £1 million. It would bring us up to at least half the average, which would be a huge increase in our constituencies.

**Mr. Challen:** My proposal may be a little modest, although later we shall find out how modest the Minister believes it is. Those of us at the bottom of the heap have to raise the profile of our constituencies, but we must do it in a way that does not upset people further up the ladder who may not want to be overtaken in the stakes. The exact sum must be right, but I am grateful that such a debate has been opened.

The situation demonstrates how little we have received. It is like asking for a new crumb to match the crumb that we have already received. Nevertheless, that would go a long way towards alleviating the problem that I fully anticipate will continue throughout next year. Unless we take a radical step, those of us at the bottom will stay at the bottom and will not notice a change in our fortunes. That would be a real scandal.

My proposal is called "top slicing". It is a familiar, justifiable concept and I hope that the Minister will consider it on its merits. After all, it is merely a small refinement to the principle that has been admitted: that the distribution of national lottery money to good causes has not worked fairly. It is a great shame that we could not just have kept our original £40 million. The money that has been drained from my constituency over the past six years to subsidise other areas could have been better spent on renewing my local communities.

However, I am pleased for the other areas. The lottery is probably the least efficient form of charity invented. More often than not, it hurts poorer pockets disproportionately. However, even though we have not been able to fulfil our pledge to ensure that it is run on a not-for-profit basis, the lottery has brought benefits to many communities that otherwise would not have received them.

My campaign to bring more lottery cash into Morley, Middleton and Rothwell will continue. It would be wrong to make a plea for assistance if local people did not get their act together and submit good, well-thought-out applications. The principle of fairness implies that we should not receive something for nothing. It also implies that we should not expect to receive nothing from something, or in our case, £40 million plus.

1.13 pm

**The Minister for Sport (Mr. Richard Caborn):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Rothwell (Mr. Challen) on securing the debate. It is his first Adjournment debate and I am sure that hon. Members agree that he has put his case extremely well this morning. I want first to clear up one or two misconceptions. I understand my hon. Friend's frustration on behalf of his constituents at not receiving the level of national lottery awards that has been made from the ticket sales. I must point out, however, that 50 per cent. of the lottery money goes straight back into prize money, so no constituency will receive more money than half its ticket sales.

Money is awarded by lottery distributors according to need. Many people do not realise that those in the better-off constituencies buy most of the tickets. I did not know that before I came to my present job in the Department. So, in a sense, there is a redistribution of wealth in some respects. The Government are aware that some areas have done better from the lottery than others. Some of the steps that we have taken since we came into power have shown that we are committed to achieving a fairer spread by direct distribution to ensure that all parts of the country benefit.

We have tried to refine the distribution of moneys for good causes. Further refinement includes, as my hon. Friend said, the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport earlier this year, in the summer, that £150 million would be targeted on schemes to be delivered by the community fund and the new opportunities fund in areas that are deprived and have received less lottery money than elsewhere.

We asked the community fund and the NOF to select the areas to be targeted under the new scheme on the basis of two criteria—deprivation and having received less lottery money. We have not specified whether they should select on the basis of county, city, constituency or district. My hon. Friend forcibly made his case for the constituency. We have not directed them in that, and we shall find out what emerges from that consultation. We hope that targeting will effectively tackle pockets of deprivation at the local level.

Coming from south Yorkshire, I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety about targeting with reference to Barnsley. The Government had discussions with coalfield communities because we believed that we had a responsibility to them in trying to restructure their economies. Lottery distribution was cited in 1997 as an aspect that was not being used as effectively as it should be. The then Secretary of State, my Friend the right hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), took that on board and proposed a scheme in the coalfield communities, and the priorities initiative was established.

**Andrew Bennett** (Denton and Reddish): Precisely when will the new money be allocated? My hon. Friend the Minister says that he has referred the matter to those bodies to make up their minds. When will they tell him how that will be done?

**Mr. Caborn:** I hope in the next few weeks. As my hon. Friend knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been preoccupied with handling bereavements following 11 September; indeed, she is in New York today and flies back this evening. Several decisions would have been made had she had more time in the Department; that is one of them. I assure my hon. Friend that that will happen in weeks, rather than months.

The priority area initiatives were established by the community fund in England and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) said, "Brass for Barnsley" was the first manifestation of that, back in April 1999, for an initial period of 12 months. He is absolutely right to say that it identified £3 million from the regional grants budget to be available as funding for Barnsley over the three years to 2002. Regionally based community fund officers worked in partnership with local development agencies to increase the funding given by the board to local voluntary community organisations in Barnsley in the metropolitan borough. That was successful: all £3 million was distributed in the first year of operation. That was commendable, because one of the criticisms that was rightly made of the fund was that a lot of bureaucracy was involved and that the money was not reaching the areas that it should.

Bit by bit we have refined the process. Almost 41 per cent. of lottery funds now go to much smaller schemes, rather than to the big ones that have to some extent distorted the figures to which my hon. Friend refers.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** Does my hon. Friend believe that targeting initiatives such as "Brass for Barnsley" would be better targeted at less well-off constituencies, in order to put some money into such constituencies? I have not done an analysis, but I suspect that if he or his Department were to do so, he would probably find out that the constituencies at the bottom end in this case are at the bottom end of the deprivation stakes, too.

**Mr. Caborn:** I do not know whether that is true. We must see this in the context of the lottery being one of the funding mechanisms to address some of the structural weaknesses of the coalfield communities. It was not standalone funding. GDP per head in Barnsley is around 62 per cent. relative to the average of the European regions. Doncaster is not down at that level. That figure is from memory, but I ask my hon. Friend to reflect that Barnsley is probably one of the poorest

*[Mr. Caborn]*

constituencies in the country. That was accelerated by the closure of the pits and consequent effect on the local economy.

My hon. Friend mentioned a charity that had had its application for an award turned down four times. I am sure that he will understand that it is not my place to comment on particular applications. That is the responsibility not of the Government but of the lottery distributors. However, I am concerned if that has been taking place without good reasons being given. Distributors take decisions independently of Ministers and concerns about specific cases should be taken up with them. If my hon. Friend approaches the various lottery distributors I am sure that he will get a full answer.

We are concerned to make the application process as straightforward as possible and for lottery distributors to work with applicants in a supportive way. That was certainly the recommendation of the quality, efficiency and standards team whom we asked to carry out an independent study of the applications process. Distributors welcomed that report and agreed to take forward its recommendations. My hon. Friend also mentioned capacity building, which is another area that needs further attention. I agree that capacity building is important and we are increasingly seeing distributors providing that kind of support, such as in the Barnsley scheme that has been mentioned. It is clear that professional support helps the lottery funds get to where they are needed.

**Andrew Bennett:** Does my hon. Friend accept that part of the problem with capacity building is that the people who are paid the money come from outside the areas that we are talking about? The money goes off to Cheltenham or some such area where those consultants come from, rather than going to the disadvantaged areas of the country.

**Mr. Caborn:** I do not know whether that is true. We put in professional community fund officers in the Barnsley area. I shall look at that. In terms of their salaries, the answer is yes, but in terms of the money coming in, I do not think that the £3 million went out of Barnsley. I think that it was invested in Barnsley. The question I would ask is, when one brings in that professionalism, does one get a better quality decision, and does the money get to where it should quicker than it would do normally? This is about cutting through some of the bureaucracy. I am open to that type of discussion and I want to see that debate taking place. I want to make sure that lottery money gets to the areas that really need it.

Some of the criticism has been justified. There has been too much bureaucracy and we should move that out of the way, get things focused and spend money effectively. As my hon. Friend may know, Sheffield Hallam university, on behalf of the DCMS and the lottery distributors, undertook a study of professional services to the lottery on the building up of capacity so that it is not always necessary to rely on outside forces, but there is capacity building inside those communities. That brings in agencies like the local authorities and other voluntary agencies to ensure that they understand how lottery applications can be framed and be successful. A number of recommendations have been made and the Department is taking them forward and hoping to build the type of capacity that my hon. Friend described.

In some quarters there is an argument about—and, indeed, some frustration about—the amount of money being held. The figure bandied around in the press is something like £3 billion, which apparently remains unspent by the distributors. In reality, almost all the money has already been committed to projects. Grants are usually paid out over a period of time according to when recipients need them. Distributors have assured us that we can expect their balances to fall dramatically over the next two or three years as more projects draw down their grants and more awards are made. We attach a high priority to ensuring that that happens.

The lottery has brought enormous benefits to this country, as my hon. Friend acknowledged. I hope that we shall continue to refine the system and address the genuine anomalies. In the next few weeks we shall announce the new £150 million fund, which will start to address some of those problems. It is an ongoing debate and our actions over the past three or four years have helped to refine the system and make distribution fairer.

**Andrew Bennett:** All we need is a simple wind-up in which the Minister says that he will give us the money.

**Mr. Caborn:** As my hon. Friend knows, if I could come here and say that, I would—but it is not so simple, as he also knows. My genuine response is that we will try to iron out the anomalies and make the distribution as fair as possible. We have taken several fundamental steps with the distribution of the lottery, which is fairer than it was four years ago. There is still further to go, which is why we shall continue to refine the system to make it even fairer.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton (in the Chair):** I thank the Minister for his response. We can now move on to our final debate, introduced by the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan).

# Renewable Energy

1.26 pm

**Mr. Andrew Robathan** (Blaby): To great fanfares on 1 October, the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, the hon. Member for Shipley (Mr. Leslie) announced that all electricity at 10 Downing street and two main Cabinet Office buildings was being generated from renewable energy sources. He said:

"The very heart of government is now being powered by electricity from renewable sources. This is an important step towards the greening of government. It is also highly symbolic".

As hon. Members know, the Government's target is to produce 5 per cent. of their electricity from renewable energy sources by the end of 2003 and 10 per cent. by the year 2010. At the same time, their target is to double the use of combined heat and power to 10 GW by 2010.

Those are laudable targets, which all who care about climate change would like to see achieved. Unfortunately, the Government also chose to introduce new electricity trading arrangements, which are having a serious impact on renewable energy and the combined heat and power industry. Both consequences were entirely unintended, although they were predicted by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which said:

"NETA will have an adverse effect on the development of renewable energy".

The Association of Electricity Producers also said:

"Renewable energy schemes will be at a considerable disadvantage in a market which favours plant with a larger and more predictable output".

In March Alcan wrote to the then Minister for Energy, the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), stating:

"NETA would be damaging to small players and this would persist".

It pointed out that there was a bias in NETA against small generators, encompassing most renewable and CHP generators.

I should say at the outset that I am an unpaid vice-president of the Combined Heat and Power Association, and vice-chairman of PARSEG—the parliamentary group on renewable and sustainable energy. My only pecuniary interest, which does not yet exist but is proposed for the future, is that I want to put my money where my mouth is and install a wind generator on my farm in Leicestershire. My wife is somewhat less keen, but I hope that I will be able to persuade her of its merits.

NETA was launched in March this year and replaced the pool system. In essence, NETA is about forward trading and is designed as a step forward in the liberalisation of the market—hopefully to the benefit of consumers. NETA was introduced by Ofgem, at the instigation of the Government. It has been followed by and probably contributed to—if it did not actually cause—a 10 per cent. reduction in electricity prices. I applaud that, although reducing prices might have the unintended consequence that it would not discourage the unnecessary and profligate use of energy and the world's resources.

In August, Ofgem published a "Review of the initial impact of NETA on smaller generators". From that came the startling conclusion that

"the data confirms that wind power is unpredictable".

On the radio this morning Callum McCarthy, the chief executive of Ofgem, said that unpredictable supplies were less valuable than predictable supplies of energy, which is a more worrying conclusion to draw than that wind does not blow at the same speed all the time. Unfortunately, he has taken that view further because NETA, which was formulated by Ofgem under his guidance, requires predictable and constant energy output and penalises unpredictable energy producers.

The renewable energy sector was the genesis of today's debate—specifically a conversation I had three weeks ago with a small wind energy producer in Leicestershire. The unpredictability of supply from his two 25 kW turbines meant that his contract with Powergen was cancelled in April. In other words, it is no longer cost-effective to run his wind generators, a fact that is mirrored throughout the country. Large wind farms are seeing a 27 per cent. reduction in the price of their electricity, while other renewable prices are down by 26 per cent. The renewable energy price is being artificially depressed by NETA; far from encouraging renewables, they are being discouraged.

As another example, a report from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, partly funded by the Department of Trade and Industry, found that the imbalance penalties imposed by NETA outweighed the payments made for supplying energy. It suggested that a 10 MW wind farm would have had a net negative unit value of minus 0.41p per kW hour. That means that the farm makes a loss just by producing and selling electricity, not even taking into account any costs involved in setting it up. Indeed, experience shows that some wind generators are finding it easier to stop producing electricity and that turbines are being switched off.

Last year, as in 1999, renewables provided only 2.8 per cent. of the electricity generated in the United Kingdom. Besides wind, other energy sources such as solar power are similarly intermittent, and there must be a great deal of encouragement for renewable energy if we are to rise from 2.8 per cent. last year to 5 per cent. of electricity production by the end of 2003. It is interesting that electricity generation by renewables was nearly 2 per cent. in 1990 and, notwithstanding the non-fossil fuel obligation, was only 2.8 per cent. 10 years later. The renewables obligation is coming, but it is not yet clear how effective that will be. On 6 March, the Prime Minister announced an additional £100 million for the development of renewables, but we do not yet know how that will be spent. All the good intentions do not seem to be leading to greater capacity for renewable energy, largely because of NETA.

If we examine combined heat and power, which according to the Government's climate change strategy has

"the potential to deliver the single largest contribution to cutting CO2 emissions in the short to medium term, at a net benefit to the UK economy",

we can see that matters are even worse. I have heard the CHP industry described recently as "in meltdown". Power exports from CHP generators have fallen by more than 60 per cent. and British Sugar has cancelled two major 70 MW CHP schemes, which was a £100 million investment. Slough Heat and Power, a

*[Mr. Andrew Robathan]*

small local producer, is considering writing off £60 million of investment because of the impact of NETA. That would lead to 70,000 tonnes a year of additional landfill waste, which the company is currently turning into fuel. To quote the Minister for the Environment,

"the CHP industry is in crisis".

The problems facing CHP are not due only to NETA, but relate to the fall in electricity prices as a consequence of NETA and the unprecedented rise in gas prices. Moreover, CHP labours under the need to pay climate change levy on exports of power from CHP producers. The Combined Heat and Power Association was promised exemption from the levy but achieved only partial exemption. As almost everyone, including the Government, believes that combined heat and power is an efficient use of energy and leads to the reduction of carbon emissions into the atmosphere and therefore a reduction of climate change, it seems ludicrous to impose the climate change levy on the export of CHP-produced energy.

Furthermore, I understand that the levy is producing only £33 million a year in revenue, which is small beer compared to the £100 million investment that British Sugar has now not made, for instance. Exempting CHP from the climate change levy could be done quickly and easily, perhaps in the Chancellor's autumn statement—assuming that he is going to make one.

It is also currently intended that CHP should be subject to the renewables obligation, and that would cost CHP producers a further £100 million a year. Many people will argue that CHP should be treated as a renewable source—a complicated argument, which I do not wish to pursue here—but it does seem perverse to ask CHP to fund the renewables obligation. The whole purpose of that obligation is to encourage environmentally friendly forms of electricity and to discourage carbon release into the atmosphere, which causes climate change. It seems to me that CHP is an efficient, environmentally friendly use of electricity that does not release extra carbon into the atmosphere.

NETA was set up by Ofgem. To say that the arrangements are complicated is a gross understatement—I would describe them as arcane in their complexity. This makes it all the more difficult for small operators and generators to find their way around them. Candidly, I suspect that there are few people in the House of Commons who understand these arrangements. I do not know whether the Minister wants to intervene to explain them—apparently not.

I am not sure that I would put myself among those who understand the arrangements, but I do understand the consequences. The unintended consequences of NETA are that the renewable energy and CHP industries are being severely undermined, and the result will be that the Government's laudable targets on renewable and CHP generation are not met. Indeed, Callum McCarthy seems in his pronouncements specifically to exclude any consideration of renewable energy. He seems to take the view that his sole intention is to organise the arrangements so that reliable and cheap electricity is provided.

I come to this debate more in sorrow than in anger, and I do not believe that this issue is party political. I want the Government to succeed in these targets for the good of the world's climate, but I see little likelihood of it happening. The Government gave Ofgem the task of creating these arrangements and the stipulation, as I understand it, that renewable energy and CHP should be encouraged and certainly not penalised—but that has not happened. It is now up to the Government to rectify the arrangements. This needs to be done urgently because it is easy to destroy something quickly, but much more difficult to set up viable renewable and CHP industries. The damage is being done now and the Government need to react quickly, not with another review that will report in a couple of years' time.

We should contrast what is happening here with the announcement on Monday in the United States of America that the environmental protection agency, at President Bush's behest, has set up a new compact to promote CHP with various partners. The Bush Administration have been criticised for their attitude to environmental matters, but they have obviously got it right regarding what the statement refers to as

"reducing air pollution and fuel consumption and leading the way towards a cleaner future".

I want to see the Government follow up their fine words with two swift actions. First, I suggest that both CHP and renewables should be taken out of NETA and given some special status—perhaps some transitional arrangements while electricity trading arrangements are again revised. Secondly, CHP exports should be exempt from the climate change levy.

I would like to wind up this debate with some quotations—the first from the Labour party manifesto issued earlier this year. On page 13 it states:

"We are putting an obligation on electricity companies to deliver 10 per cent. of the UK's electricity from renewable sources by 2010 with a doubling of combined heat and power. We will consider setting further targets for renewables".

Those are fine words; I, too, want to see those obligations met. Nick Goodall is chairman of the Confederation of Renewable Energy Associations and is also the chief executive of the British Wind Energy Association. At the end of August, in response to the review of initial impact conducted by Ofgem's chief executive, Callum McCarthy, he said:

"OFGEM have today verified long held concerns that NETA is incompatible with the UK renewables and CHP targets and is also contrary to the widely expected outcome of the Government's energy review that the use of renewables will increase well beyond the 10 per cent. target in the longer term. The NETA process is damaging existing renewable energy projects and sending out the wrong signals to industry."

At the beginning of the debate, I quoted a Minister who said that the Government's commitment to green energy was symbolic. What is being symbolised? I hope that I have illustrated that on this issue the left hand of the Government has no idea what the right hand is doing. That gives the lie to the Government's claim that they have an holistic approach. I hope that the Minister for Industry and Energy will explain not only that he understands the problems, but that he is taking action to put things right for the long-term benefit of this country and the world's environment.

**The Minister for Industry and Energy (Mr. Brian Wilson):** I thank the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) for his choice of subject and for the way in which he introduced the debate. I recognise his work as vice-chairman of PARSEG, a highly successful and valued parliamentary group on renewable and sustainable energy. I welcome the fact that he has focused attention on these genuine and urgent matters in an Adjournment debate. We agree on the fundamental fact that it is a big issue, which, as he said, is largely non-party political. It is also an issue that the Government are interested in addressing; we have commitments and targets, and it is therefore entirely in our interests to ensure that nothing inadvertent happens to prevent our achieving those targets. I recognise the hon. Gentleman's genuine concerns and the need for an urgent response. I hope that I shall make some progress in responding today.

Although I have come to the issue only recently, I have a long-standing record of supporting renewable technologies, so I have no interest in paying lip service to targets if events on the ground are running contrary to their fulfilment. If there is such a problem we must tackle it. Any inconsistency of approach will be picked up quickly by investors who will not make the investment and commitment that we will need in the renewable sector if the targets are to be achieved. The issue is how we maintain our renewables targets. How do we advance; how do we send out powerful messages about the Government's commitment to renewables while also recognising that there are certain forces at work, one of which may be neater in some of its operations but may have a counter-productive effect? I do not reject the contention that such a problem exists.

In response to the Ofgem report to which the hon. Gentleman referred, I intend shortly to issue my own consultation document which will contain proposals specifically aimed at addressing the concerns of the smaller generator community. This debate is timely; NETA has been introduced and we have received Ofgem's assessment of the impact of NETA on smaller generators. I am about to respond to Ofgem and consultations will be held on that basis. That might sound as if there will be a long, bureaucratic process, but I assure hon. Members that the process will be rapid. Ofgem reported quickly on the first few months of operation. We will respond quickly with our views about what has to be done, and await the generators' response. The process will be concluded within the next two or three months, and there will be some kind of outcome, and whether or not it is exactly what the hon. Member or I want, we shall reach conclusions on the debate in a reasonable time. I am keen to advance the development of NETA in an open and inclusive way, but I am also totally committed to renewables. We must somehow synthesise those two objectives and make them compatible.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Prime Minister's announcement of £100 million for renewables. That figure comes from a separate performance and innovation unit report on the future of renewables. The allocation of that money to individual firms will be announced shortly. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will become aware of that. Consultation has taken place and the allocation of the money, which is additional to other investment in renewables, will be announced shortly. The hon. Gentleman fairly recognised that a lot of money and commitment is being put into renewables, but we must ensure that the end product is as we intend it to be.

The new electricity trading arrangements, which have come to be known as NETA, made significant changes to the operation of the electricity market in England and Wales. Two Ofgem reports on the working of the arrangements over their first three months have made us better informed on NETA's performance and issues arising from it. It has been suggested—even in the context of this debate—that NETA was a disaster that had not produced positive results.

**Mr. Robathan** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Wilson:** The hon. Gentleman suggests that he does not think so.

In fact, NETA has been a success in its own terms. The introduction of a more efficient regime into a more transparent, inclusive and efficient pricing system has meant that wholesale electricity prices are up to 25 per cent. lower than the artificially high prices that existed under the pool arrangements. NETA has delivered quite spectacular results in a short time. Although it does not negate the argument made by the hon. Member for Blaby, I can say that the price reduction for renewables has been about 17 per cent., which is less than the overall reduction achieved under NETA.

**Mr. Robathan:** My figures, which may be out of date, suggest that the position is the other way around, but I accept that the figures may change by the day. I certainly do not criticise NETA in general, merely in specific ways.

**Mr. Wilson:** The figures may change by the end of the debate if I receive another piece of paper, but I do not expect that to happen. The figure on renewables is lower than that for overall price reduction. I do not mean to quibble over that. The impact on renewables, which are produced by smaller producers and have higher relative capital costs, is clearly proportionately greater than is the case for larger generators.

NETA's role allows market signals to set electricity prices. It is also vital that NETA delivers security of supply. Ofgem's report on the first three months of the operation of NETA shows the rapid emergence of a strong and liquid forward market, and all that contributes to reliable longer-term price signals for investors to use in planning new generation. NETA's development will secure our longer-term aims for encouraging a move towards a more cost-reflective and efficient system, within which the benefits of embedded generation and renewables are recognised. In the longer term, there will also be benefits for renewables.

As the hon. Gentleman said, it was always predicted in some quarters that NETA would damage both renewables and the smaller generator industry in general. That is why my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Peter Hain)—now the Minister for Europe—asked Ofgem to complete a report on the impact of NETA over the first two months of operation. That report was based on the experience of 40 companies and organisations, including some

*[Mr. Wilson]*

renewable generators. Even that small sample should tell us how the predicted problems were working out in reality. The Ofgem report, which does not contain anything contradictory to what the hon. Gentleman said, states that the volume of trade in renewables is slowing down only slightly. Although the same volume of renewables is sold at market, prices have dropped substantially. I hope that improved future contract terms will address that problem.

The renewables contracts that were traded in the first two months of NETA were negotiated before 27 March, and I expect them to contain a speculative element, but as NETA settles down and the industry gains trading experience, future contract prices may stabilise. The report stated that in NETA's early days, sharp price hikes had occurred when trying to balance the market. That would have a greater impact on small generators. As the market has matured, the price spread has narrowed, and the balance and settlement system has been modified in the light of earlier experiences. The cost of balancing is now half of what it was. We should continue to reduce volatility, and ensure that electricity prices are cost reflective.

There were concerns that renewables would suffer when we moved to the NETA market because they are less predictable. The Ofgem report analysed the predictability of generating technology, and found that wind power was the only one judged to be less predictable. It is not a remarkable discovery that wind power is a less predictable technology, but it is interesting that it is alone in that.

The report also showed that consolidation services, which could group smaller generators into portfolios of predictable and less predictable generation, had not yet emerged in the market. That, possibly, is a partial solution. I do not deny that the issue exists, but we can take evolutionary steps to address the problem. In my response to the Ofgem report, I will reflect the hon. Gentleman's concerns—and mine.

The hon. Member for Blaby mentioned combined heat and power. I recognise the urgency of that matter; in addition to my departmental work, I spoke on the subject at a couple of meetings in Brighton at my party's conference, once for the Combined Heat and Power Association and once for GEC Alsthom. It was useful to hear straight from the coalface about the urgent problems that affect CHP. There is no point in proudly announcing targets for CHP if, as is the case now, something unexpected is happening on the ground.

As the hon. Member for Blaby acknowledged, it is not NETA but a combination of high gas prices and falling electricity prices that is the primary cause of CHP's problems, although NETA is a factor in falling electricity prices. We have done much on CHP, introducing, for example, the climate change levy exemption for good quality CHP used on site or sold direct to other users. CHP is a key option for energy-intensive industries that want to negotiate an 80 per cent. reduction in CCL.

About £70 million has been made available this financial year for enhanced capital allowance. We have offered tax incentives to companies investing in CHP, and have exempted electricity generating plant machinery in CHP schemes from business rates. The energy efficiency fund under the climate change levy is to be administered by the carbon trust, and CHP schemes are expected to benefit from it. A lot has been done in support of CHP. It has enjoyed a period of expansion, much interest from industry, investment and proposed investment, but if the reality is that people are now walking away from it, I have to treat that seriously. Indeed, the economic difficulties faced by CHP were highlighted by the findings in Ofgem's report on NETA and the smaller generators.

As a holding statement, I can say that my Department, working with industry and other Departments to address those difficulties, is collaborating with the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—the lead Department in the development of the Government's CHP strategy. The strategy, which I hope will be published soon, will address both existing measures to support CHP and new measures to encourage development. High gas prices are a large part of the problem, and we have a three-point strategy to address that. We are pressing for greater competition in Europe, improving the function of the home market, and taking action against anti-competitive behaviour.

I accept that the problems of CHP are urgent and have to be considered closely if we are to continue to issue targets. At the moment, they are not in tune with events unfolding in the CHP industry. I recognise that major companies that had made major commitments to CHP have now reversed those decisions. In particular, I am aware of the British Sugar decision to cancel its investment. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am aware of all those matters, and he does us all a service by drawing our attention to them.

As with CHP, the future of renewables is not only dependent on how NETA works, although that is important. I have formed a co-ordinating committee with Callum McCarthy to advise on the implementation of the recommendations of the embedded generation working group, which reported in June. That group identified a whole range of actions designed to improve the incentives for distribution companies to ease the connection of all small generation, including renewables. I am determined to see those actions implemented as soon as is practicable.

The renewables obligation underpins much of the discussion because it is the practical embodiment of our commitment to renewables. Shortly, I will be introducing to the House a draft order to implement the renewables obligation. That will oblige licensed electricity suppliers to provide a specified proportion of electricity from renewable sources in future. That will be the prime mechanism through which we will increase the uptake of renewable energy between now and 2010, and beyond. The renewables obligation aims to produce a secure market as far ahead as at least 2027. Our interim aim is that 10 per cent. of licensed electricity sales will be generated from renewables by 2010.

I do not dissent from the thrust of what the hon. Member for Blaby has said. The extent to which NETA has been the direct source of problems is clearly a matter of degree, particularly in the case of combined heat and power, as many other factors are at work. NETA has delivered considerable successes in other ways, but I have no interest in denying or concealing the fact that there are problems for wind energy and CHP. I am very anxious to address those problems. One of my main obligations is to deliver on the Government's renewables targets, and to send out strong, consistent signals that we want to help to stimulate the renewables markets. If perceived, or real, problems stand in the way of those aims, I share the hon. Gentleman's wish to remove them and to give a clear commitment to the future of renewables and CHP.

*It being Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the sitting lapsed, without Question put.*

# Westminster Hall

*Thursday 18 October 2001*

[SYLVIA HEAL *in the Chair*]

## Early Years Education

*[Relevant documents: First Report from the Education and Employment Committee, Session 2000-01, HC 33; the Government response thereto, in the Committee's Fourth Special Report of 2000-01, CH361; and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Education Sub-Committee on 25 April and 2 May 2001, HC 438-i and ii.]*

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That the sitting be now adjourned.—[*Jim Fitzpatrick.*]

2.30 pm

**Mr. Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield): It gives me great pleasure to open this debate on the Select Committee on Education and Employment's report on early years. I am especially pleased because I assumed the chairmanship of the Education Sub-Committee late in the previous Parliament, and this report was the first produced under my chairmanship.

I did not write the terms of reference, which were already established when I became Chairman; my able colleagues had already worked hard on that. However, I made one small contribution to the terms of reference. We were to concentrate on the years three to eight, but during initial discussions and the seminar that we initiated to discuss how we would develop the inquiry, it became obvious that it would not be wise to concentrate on ages three to eight because a child's development starts at birth: if we intended seriously to examine early years education and the early years environment, it was clear that we should start from birth. Others might have argued that we should discuss what sort of music should be played close to a pregnant woman's stomach and so on. We treated such suggestions seriously, but we decided that birth to eight was the right framework.

I start by confessing that the fascinating aspect of good Select Committee work—our Committee worked very well on the report—is that one learns so much as one goes along. My background is that of a university teacher, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you are one of my former students; I taught you a long time ago, and you were a highly successful student. I am a specialist in higher education, and when I was a Labour Front-Bench spokesman, I worked on policy for the 14 to 19 age group.

It was a delight to me to learn about early years. I had to rely on wonderful colleagues and experts who knew far more than me, and I was surprised by the sheer quality of both academic practitioners and practitioners in the field—those who are doing the job. There is a richness of voluntary organisations and non-governmental organisations of peerless quality. There was absolutely no problem in learning what was going on from that range of experts. Had it not been for wise advice from three women—Professor Christine Pascal, Mrs Rosemary Peacocke and Professor Kathy Silva—who were special advisers to the Committee, our report would not have been of such high quality, so I thank them for their good work.

The range of evidence given to the Committee required us to get out of the rarefied atmosphere of the House of Commons and see what was happening on the ground. We pursued that course vigorously in Oxford, Bristol, London and many other places. We visited many early years settings and learned a great deal about what was happening in the field. First, we held a seminar in which we shared knowledge, then we got out and looked at good practice; in addition, we did what all good Select Committees do—obtained written and oral evidence of high quality.

We received positive responses from the Government, some of which I shall mention this afternoon. One never gets all the responses that one wants from any Government—if one does, it means that the report is not very good: one should always ask for things far beyond what one knows that the Government will give, certainly in the short term. However, the framework and background of this report were a Government who, when they entered office in 1997, were very committed to early years education. They boasted about how much cash they had committed, and despite arguments about the exact sums, there is no doubt that a lot of money has been ploughed into early years. It is the Select Committee's job to make sure that that money has been a good investment for the taxpayer.

We expect Governments to trumpet their track record and what they consider to be successes, but the Select Committee, as a body that represents Parliament, must determine whether the Government have stuck to their manifesto pledges. If they said something in their manifesto and the electors voted for them on that basis, we should be part of the tracking mechanism to find out whether they have kept their promises. Moreover, it is all very well throwing money at a problem, but if that money is wasted an opportunity is missed and no one will be very impressed.

As we went around the country and took evidence, we saw that some very good things are happening in the pre-school sector. Welcome developments are enabling children to have half-time education at four, and there is a gradual trend towards providing that at age three. All of us who know anything about the subject—I am no expert, but having had four children I have gained some practical experience of early years education—know how important it is to give children the right environment for early years development.

I have missed out one aspect of our unique inquiry. We heard from a senior student from one of the university of London's research institutes—I will later correct the record in terms of which college, although I think that it is University college. That PhD student was researching the development of the human brain in the early stages and the appropriate education for—[*Interruption.*] I think that that came from outside, Madam Deputy Speaker. To resume, it was important to hear from an expert on the development of the brain as it enabled us to examine what stimulation is appropriate for a child in his early years.

Any good Select Committee realises that its inquiry has not been a full job. Although we extended our period to nought to five years, and then to nought to eight, to be honest we did most of our work on the three to five period, even though we made up in part for that when we extended back to birth. However, because of that expertise on early brain development, we uncovered

*[Mr. Barry Sheerman]*

interesting areas that we should further examine. I believe that a Select Committee that does its job well does not simply carry out an inquiry—for example, into early years—and then say that it is done. Many people would say that on its completion a report can be put on a shelf and allowed to gather dust, but that is not right. We should return to the subject within a short time, revive it, add to it and keep on going back to it. The report deals with such a vital period of education and with such an important sector that we should not walk away and forget about it. It should be returned to as source material and built upon. I hope that special attention will later be paid to the period from birth to three.

One of the more self-evident of our recommendations, albeit one that needed saying, was to urge the Government and everyone else in the sector to take parents more seriously. The involvement of the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. O'Brien), who is sadly no longer on the Committee, was strong on that issue. He felt, as did we all, that parental involvement is essential. That may be self-evident, but the early years often seem to exclude the parent. Committee members were keen to involve the parent from the early stages of assessing a child and understanding what the child needs in terms of stimulation. Another recommendation was not to be obsessive about the age at which a child begins school, or pre-school, but instead to be obsessive about the school having the right environment, conditions and stimulation for the child; that is more important than a fixed age.

We felt it important to treat the parent as the key person in the development of the child. We wanted to say that we understood how crucial the period from nought to three is to a child's development. However, that period is also difficult to influence. The sure start programme has triggered massive investment in projects across the country, especially in more deprived areas. It is, without doubt, an interesting innovation, but during the period in which we carried out our inquiry most sure start initiatives were in their early days, so it was too soon to draw conclusions. We found that those who often needed help most were families at home, especially mothers at home who normally spend the most time with a child aged nought to three. We felt that if parents were to be reached out to, they must understand the importance of early stimulation.

At an early excellence centre in Oxford, or perhaps it was Bristol, we saw some fascinating work that brought parents into the centre even when the mother was pregnant and later when the child was tiny. Parents were taught about the importance of things that many people take for granted, such as play, nursery rhymes and other activities that stimulate children in their early years. Getting through to parents is a delicate operation—a balance has to be struck.

Later in my speech, I will make some harsh comments about the Government, but I am pleased to see that Professor Lesley Abbott, who has an extraordinary reputation in this field, has been seconded from the wonderful establishment of Manchester Metropolitan university to the Department for Education and Skills to devise a curriculum for the under-threes. That is a wonderful idea. In the past, people might have thought that a dreadful development, but I think it is a step forward which the Government took because they were encouraged by our inquiry. The issues are sensitive and I hope that the whole Chamber will understand the delicacy required in providing early stimulation for a child. The work following our report must be about how to strike a balance.

We went to Denmark, which is not particularly exotic but very pleasant. We went not because we wanted a trip, but because we wanted to see what is considered the best practice in Europe for early years. We learned a lot. One of the wonderful things about getting away from one's own country and looking at someone else's practice is that it enables one to reflect on domestic practice. I came away feeling that I did not want to recreate the Danish system in the United Kingdom, even though the Danes pour money into it and there is much to recommend it. In many cases, Danish children that are just weaned leave their families to go to some form of care at 7 o'clock in the morning, reappearing at home at 5 o'clock—a pattern that persists throughout their young lives. They see their parents only at weekends and after 5 o'clock in the evening. I would like the Danish resources but I am not sure that I would want such an all-embracing service—nor, moreover, would most of my constituents like to face 50 per cent. income tax and 25 per cent. VAT to pay for such a system. Nevertheless, it was interesting to see what the Danes are doing, and there is no doubt that they invest considerable money, resources and care in early years.

That leads me to the second part of our core recommendations. I know from our oral examination that the press have picked up on this point, but it bears repeating. Most people in this country would not get someone who is unqualified and untrained to fix an appliance such as a washing machine or dishwasher, even if the person were recommended or appeared in the Yellow Pages. However, many people leave their children in the care of unqualified people who are paid the minimum wage, or sometimes less when the rules are bent.

**Mr. Jonathan Shaw** (Chatham and Aylesford): That is breaking the law.

**Mr. Sheerman:** Yes, but I am trying to be a realist.

In terms of quality of training, the pre-school care system in Denmark, which covers up to age seven, was astonishing. All staff are graduates and properly trained, and on average they earn only about 10 per cent. less than qualified teachers. According to evidence given to our Committee, pay and training in this country are worst in respect of the ages of nought to three, five and eight—probably the most sensitive period in a child's development.

**Mr. David Chaytor** (Bury, North): I accept that training is crucial, but does my hon. Friend share my concern about the Government's response to the report's recommendations on training? They tended to focus on the need to get more child care workers with qualified teacher status and more graduates in the profession. However, discussions with the Bury early years development and child care partnership in my constituency lead me to believe that the real priority is to get more unskilled and unqualified workers who have

basic training. We should get more people through NVQ level 2, because that is the level at which need is greatest. Will my hon. Friend comment on that, and perhaps suggest that the Minister discuss the need for more NVQ training in his winding-up speech?

**Mr. Sheerman:** I am sure that the Minister heard what my hon. Friend says. That voice from Bury is very welcome, but I want to have my cake and eat it: I want basic training, as our report strongly recommends, but I also want a graduate-trained teacher in every setting. Indeed, having our cake and eating it is what good education policy should be about.

It is early days for sure start. Although we welcome the programme, concern persists—here comes my first piece of hard news for the Government. As is usual after producing a Select Committee report, we have stayed in touch with the special advisers who gave evidence to the inquiry—some of whom are not a million miles away from this debate—and we hear on that wonderful grapevine about what is going on. There is concern about a slowdown in the rollout of sure start: the figures reveal a big underspend, and there appears to be a bottleneck obstructing the next tranche. Evaluation of best practice in the early stages of sure start may not be taking place or being communicated fast enough. That is the view of many people who took part in the inquiry. I hope that the Minister will respond to that.

Sure start is welcome because it will break through the cycle of deprivation, underachievement in education and social exclusion. It is vital to tackle poverty between the ages of nought and three, so anything that may prevent sure start from being successful is a cause of great concern. Most members of the Committee saw sure start as a great cross-departmental opportunity to break into the cycle of deprivation and underperformance that marks so many families and children.

Here is good news for the Government—my old colleague the Minister will be pleased. Most of us thought that what I call the early years partnerships—they are really called the early years development and child care partnerships—had the raw potential to act as energisers that would bring together, with leadership and at every local authority level, all the people and groups interested in early years education. I am disappointed that in my local authority of Kirklees leadership still comes from the local council. We recommended that the chair of early years partnerships should, if possible, come from the independent sector, because too often one could see the signs of the local authority being reluctant to let go. If we could clone Rosemary Peacocke, who chairs the partnership in Oxford and was one of our special advisers, and scatter copies of her around the rest of the country, what a formidable group of chairs we would have. We need independent chairs because if early years partnerships are to be successful they must provide leadership and be bold: they must set the agenda. However, some of the evidence suggests that they are not energising as quickly as they should.

I want to link training and pay to a practical problem. Our report strongly recommends that as we gain the real plus, celebrated by most, of more children being able to get into pre-school, paid for by the Government, at four and now three, we should not push them through the system into formal learning too early. Pushing them into reception classes before they are ready does children more damage than not giving them the education at all. Many experts are saying that four-year-olds are being put into reception classes. What next—three-year-olds?

In practical terms, that means that we lose adult-child ratios of 1:11 and 1:13 and instead get a ratio of 1:25, which entails formal learning where children sit in little rows and learn by rote. That is not what we want for our children in their early years. We urge the Government to take action. It cannot be good to ratchet down the start of formal learning to the point where it comes too early and too quickly. Our report flags up that danger, which we identified by keeping our ears to the ground and talking to informants. On the ground, it is a more significant concern than it was six months or a year ago—we published the report a year ago come December. The Government and Ministers must be careful. We do not want children in the wrong setting and atmosphere for learning: that must not happen. We must also be careful to ensure both that staff are appropriate and that staff-pupil ratios are right.

Throughout our report we said that early years has historically suffered from the divisions among education, social services, health and, if one is honest, the Benefits Agency. Joined-up government can make a significant difference with integration. The Government stated yesterday that they are keen on integration, and the early years partnerships help to achieve that, but we still need commitment and leadership from both Ministers and a single Department to ensure that that happens and does not go by the bye.

There has been good progress, but I must tell the Minister that the word on the street, or at least the word from some people on some streets in some towns, is that the Government are losing their interest in early years—that having produced the Green Paper and the White Paper they consider that they have done early years and they have decided to move on to post-11 education. The former Under-Secretary Education and Employment, my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Margaret Hodge), who has moved up, was answerable to the House of Commons and passionately involved in her work. I am sure that the new ministerial team is as committed, but I remind the Minister that the word is that there has been a fashion shift: perhaps the commitment to sure start—and to a great deal else besides—has decreased. I do not say that as Chairman of the Select Committee. A voice—not a loud voice, but a little voice—is asking the Government, "Have you lost interest? Is there less interest than there was?" We will need strong leadership from the Government if the process is to continue. We need to care continuously about this issue.

When we took evidence, one thing that shocked members of the Committee was the uneven distribution of early years settings around the country, which meant that some people had few options in terms of early years care. In other areas, there was little integration of the marketplace, which meant that children were carted around to many different settings. One piece of evidence revealed that some families were taking their children to as many as six settings in a week, which cannot be good. Children were walking—we hope that the children were walking because, as we said, it is an outdoor activity that is good for them—to six settings.

*[Mr. Sheerman]*

I shall end my remarks—I am sorry that I have taken so long—by stating that although the Government have done some excellent things on early years it has been suggested that some backsliding has occurred. We hope that the Government will not backslide. It will be necessary to continue to invest considerable resources in early years provision if the Committee's ambition, that all the nation's children should be able to realise their full potential, is to be achieved. It will be achieved—along with further successes at ages seven, 11, 14 and 16—and accompanied by a subsequent increase in the number of entrants into higher education only if early years education continues to be of paramount importance to all Governments, now and in future. Working on the early years report has taught the Committee that there is only one education system, which integrates upward and downward. Early stimulation is vital. Imagination and creativity must be awakened in children when they are very young, because the cost and difficulty of doing that becomes greater as children get older. It is therefore essential to get it right at an early stage.

I have spoken for long enough, but I emphasise what my remarks have already made clear—every member of the Committee felt that working on the report was not only interesting and stimulating, but highly enjoyable. Members learned how to understand early years education. I realised that, although I have been visiting schools for many years, I had not been doing the job properly. I was taught for the first time how to look at a classroom—how to interpret the paintings and artwork on the walls and the other schoolwork. Therefore, I should like to add as a postscript that if working on the report educated me at my stage in life, it must have been a celebratory experience for every other member of the Committee.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker**: Order. The number of hon. Members who are present indicates that there is considerable interest in the debate. I hope that many, if not all, will be able to catch my eye. It will be helpful if hon. Members keep their contributions brief.

3.1 pm

**Mr. Andrew Turner** (Isle of Wight): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak. I apologise for the fact that I shall have to leave at 4.30 pm for a meeting of Standing Committee D and will therefore not be present for the conclusion of the debate.

I understand that there is a tradition that members of the Select Committee are more likely to catch the eye of the Speaker in debates such as this, and I am grateful for that, although I do feel a bit of a fraud because I was not involved in any of the deliberations of the Committee that produced the report. I am also not qualified to speak because, unlike the Chairman of the Committee, I have no children, nor do I have experience of early years teaching. My limited experience has been gained in my constituency and from serving on an early years partnership on behalf of the London borough of Southwark. That partnership was independently chaired, as the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) suggested that it should be. The chairman was none other than the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), whose chairmanship was certainly independent of the council.

My speech has two parts: I shall offer three general observations, then make a few remarks based on my local and national experience. The first of my three observations is that there is a tendency to over-bureaucratise the development of education; the early years sector suffers from that. Secondly, there has been a tendency to diminish the role of parents compared with that of professionals; the report fully recognises that. Thirdly, funding and accountability of early years education is overcomplicated, which can lead to waste, duplication and further complexity.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield said that we must take parents more seriously, and in paragraph 10 the report states:

"Parents are the first and most enduring educators of their children."

There is a danger of patronising, undermining or de-skilling parents by treating them as though they know less and have less appropriate instincts than the professionals who are involved in early years development. In *The Times* today, the head of policy of the National Family and Parenting Institute says:

"Experts are undermining the confidence of parents in their own ability to bring up happy, healthy and well-adjusted children."

The article continues:

"A survey of 1,391 parents found that despite their deep concerns about their role and the wellbeing of their children, a substantial proportion—48 per cent.—felt that they did not require outside help from parenthood experts. When they did want help or information, parents were likely to turn first to family and friends and then to local services, such as their doctor, local school or playgroup"

rather than to national or Government information sources. It is entirely healthy for parents to look to local expertise, whether it is qualified, as in the case of doctors; part qualified, as in the case of early years settings; or totally unqualified, as in the case of family and friends. I am pleased that the report places such emphasis on involving parents in the daily activities of their children's settings. The report states in paragraph 13:

"more important than the mother's educational qualifications is what the mother does with the child."

We should all have that text before us.

There is a national shortage of child minders, and I wonder whether that is getting better or worse. Is the shortage associated with increasing demands on child minders to register, to attend courses and conferences and to obtain qualifications? Is a shortage that is based on such causes more beneficial, even if it leads to fewer places for youngsters, than providing more places with less qualified child minders would be? I am worried about the bureaucratisation of the profession.

In illustrating the bureaucracy, I am indebted to Sandra Snell of the Bethel pre-school and nursery in my constituency, which was established by the Bethel Christian fellowship. She told me about the massive effort required in a relatively small nursery for such things as the creation and writing of policies: there are

30 pages of policy in a document for a setting that takes only 60 youngsters. What can we do to slim down the requirement for policy documentation and the provision of standards on which to base those policies?

Mrs. Snell welcomes Government action to amalgamate the work of the Office for Standards in Education and social service inspections so that inspections are not duplicated, but she is worried to discover that an Isle of Wight kitemark is to be established, apparently at the behest of the Government who say that every setting must be accredited by a kitemark. Isle of Wight council is setting up a kitemark, as are other local authorities and some national bodies. That is getting rid of duplicate inspection with one hand, and creating it with another. There is little point amalgamating two nationally required inspections if the Government or local authorities invent another. That adds to the burden on a setting and its management.

Mrs. Snell mentioned her concern about the availability of capital resources, especially in a church setting. It is sometimes difficult for her to obtain funding because her playgroup is based in a church building, which is used for religious purposes at weekends. She was concerned about the shortage of revenue to pay sufficient and sufficiently qualified staff. Even on the Isle of Wight, where unemployment among women is high, it is difficult to obtain and pay appropriately her unqualified staff, let alone the qualified staff whom she hopes to employ in her nursery. Mrs. Snell would like a reliable income stream and to have effective measures against non-payers.

Mrs Snell drew to my attention the possible scope for financial abuse: for example, in order to claim the working families tax credit, parents put their children in the nursery for a fortnight or three weeks then withdraw them but continue to receive the money. Concern has been expressed that some local education authorities declare that all children are needy children for the purposes of receiving money for early years education. They claim the money, but cannot then provide the children to fill the places that have been created with that money. LEAs insist that children move too early into reception classes in primary schools, telling parents that there may not be a place available for their children if they are not moved into reception classes—a point that I am glad was mentioned by the hon. Member for Huddersfield. They say that a place may be available at four, or rising five, but not at five, with the result that children are moved out of the nursery into reception too early. The EYDCP, which is composed primarily of providers, is not necessarily as accountable as it should be to those who pay the bills. I hope that the Minister can deal with those matters.

I have not been uncritical of the Government's policy or the report. I congratulate the Government on their efforts to meet perceived need, but the report needs to cover the key question posed by the hon. Member for Huddersfield, which is whether we are receiving good value for the money that is spent on such an important service. Are all children benefiting from early years provision, or are we providing more than commensurate benefit to the education of young children? Perhaps we should deal with that matter on a future occasion.

3.12 pm

**Valerie Davey** (Bristol, West): I was pleased to be a member of the Education and Employment Committee that drew up the report and proud to take its members to see the quality of nursery provision in Bristol. We in Bristol have a good record: we set up one of the first nursery nurses colleges after the war and our early years provision is of remarkable quality. I was also pleased that, during the Committee's visit, the Reggio exhibition was being held in Bristol, which meant that we could enjoy international flavour from the Italian village that has prided itself on the way in which music, dance, painting and sculpture have been motivating factors in early years education. Taking members of the Committee to see that exhibition was an important part of sharing with my colleagues what was happening in Bristol.

I shall focus on the last of the matters that the Committee examined, which is at what age formal schooling should start. It was not long before the then Under-Secretary with responsibility for early years education said, in a robust response to the Committee, that there was no point querying the statutory age at which children started school. In fact, she said that the argument was redundant.

In another context, some of us went to Switzerland to see the range of early years provision there. We recognise that children in many countries in Europe start statutory education at a later age than children here, and we share many convictions on the subject with those in other countries. However, the former Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Margaret Hodge), is an astute politician and recognised that as education for children in this country has started at the age of five since the Education Act 1870, there is no question of changing that age.

None the less, it is worth considering a little more carefully what we mean by that starting age. The law states that children start statutory education the term after their fifth birthday. Most parents recognise that—certainly, the parents of my generation took their children to school once they were five to join the reception class, in which they learned in a range of ways to be social and creative. Little formal education clicked in until the following year.

Many parents still have difficulty understanding the terms used in early years. The Chairman of our Sub-Committee rightly pointed out that early years can mean three to five plus, nought to five or, as the report finally defined it, nought to eight years. We carefully defined what is now meant by a reception class, bearing in mind the age at which children join it. Today, it is not as I knew it: it now means children who have reached their fourth birthdays and will go on to become five in that year, whereas year 1 is five rising six.

Those ages are important to remember when considering the statutory requirement for children starting school, which starts at year 1. We have somehow slipped in a year almost surreptitiously, as there was an important period in which rising fives were encouraged to enter school. I was a member of a county council at the time, and the way in which rising fives were encouraged to come to school and have all the benefit of, initially, an extra term in education was brilliant. If my twins, with their July birthdays, had been rising fives, they would have started school at Easter.

*[Valerie Davey]*

The report contains a useful table that shows the range of early years provision. Children arrive in year 1 at anything from exactly five years old to five years and 11 months. We must recognise the fact that children at that age should not be put into year compartments. As any parent knows, half a year makes a huge difference. My hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) is right to say that the emphasis must be on the culture, the provision made, the staffing levels and the whole remit of education provided for the children according to their stage of development rather than their age.

We carefully stated that education in early years needs to be provided according to the child's stage of development, and no one knows that better than professional teachers. That is why the Committee was concerned to ensure that highly qualified professional teachers were responsible at every stage in early years. We were not prepared to equivocate about that

We made it a firm recommendation that the teacher-pupil ratio in reception should be 1:15; in fact, we were a little more generous and said the adult-child ratio, and the Minister graciously accepted that. However, we also said that it should be 1:15 in year 1. In other words, the foundation stage, which the report recognised covers children aged three to five-plus, with all their wonderful characteristics, should cover reception and the first part of key stage 1, in year 1. We are talking about personal, social and emotional development in the foundation stage, communication in language and literature, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development. Those are clearly key subjects for the foundation stage, but they are also important for year 1 and the beginning of key stage 1. I meet teachers in infant schools who celebrate with us the introduction of the foundation stage and who welcome the training that teachers are being given to develop it. That is not happening in isolation; it is being linked with development in key stage 1. In that way, teachers will anticipate and understand a child's development from three, four and five right through to the end of key stage 1.

Teachers at schools in Bristol that I visited again this September told me, "Our professionalism comes up against Ofsted." Ofsted is examining not only the literacy hour in year 1, but the development of the formal stage of education in the reception year. There are some very careful words in the report from people at Ofsted and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, who tried almost to fudge the fact that the curriculum stretches back into the reception year and can be judged by Ofsted in terms of curriculum. I shrink in horror from the Chairman's tentative recommendation that there should be a nought to three curriculum. I do not want the curriculum that Ofsted monitors and regulates to stretch back into the early years. I want the Reggio concept of the creative spirit and the creative nurturing of the child to develop through the reception year into year 1 and as far up the system as possible.

The cry "too formal, too soon" comes persistently from the trade unions and the professional bodies. I want to underline the report's view that we need to ensure that there is a less formal approach in the foundation year and into year 1. We should question Ofsted about being too strict in its observance through year 1. We need to recognise teachers' professionalism. Children do not legally have to enter statutory education until year 1. In many cases, it genuinely represents reception. I celebrate nursery education.

I end by underlining the most important of the report's recommendations. I want an adult-child ratio in year 1 of 1:15, with one of the adults present being, of course, a professionally trained teacher.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr. Peter Pike (in the Chair):** Order. Many hon. Members want to speak. Madam Deputy Speaker suggested that brevity would be essential if all those who wanted to be called were to catch the eye of the Chair. I understand that the Front Benchers would like to begin winding up at 5 o'clock.

3.24 pm

**Bob Spink** (Castle Point): I welcome the increased attention given to early years policy and practice in recent years. I congratulate the Committee on its report, although I had no part in its preparation: although I am now a member of the Committee, I was not a Member of Parliament during its production. The report makes many good recommendations, but like my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Turner) I have a couple of reservations. In particular, I share his concern about increasing bureaucracy in early years provision. That is unnecessary and to be deplored. However, I shall not repeat his comments about that.

The key responsibility for the education and care of children must lie with parents and the wider family. It is in that context that we should study the report and think about policy development in the future. Development of child care and early years care and education is increasingly necessary because of changes in the way in which families are structured. There are many more families in which both parents need to work and many more one-parent families these days. As my hon. Friend said, we must do nothing that dilutes the responsibility, experience and skills of parents, or to undermine their duty or ability to care for their children in their own way.

3.26 pm

**Ms Meg Munn** (Sheffield, Heeley): I shall address my remarks mainly to issues relating to early years centres and joint working between health, education and social services, and to the recommendations for years 9, 10 and 11. My working background before becoming a Member of Parliament was in social services.

In the 1980s, when I worked with young people, there was often huge frustration about the fact that many teenagers' problems could have been predicted when they were young children first entering school. The importance of their previous experience and what had happened to them in the first years of their life to determining what would happen when they were older seemed to me to have been overlooked. I am not here as an expert witness or to give evidence, so I shall not go into great detail about my academic experience of this sphere, but we know that the way in which early years

issues are tackled by parents and children as the children go through the toddler stage and become more independent of their parents is to some extent repeated when young people reach adolescence. If those issues are dealt with well in the early years, fewer problems are likely as a young person reaches the teenage years.

I welcome the Government's approach to early years and the current level of investment. It is long overdue. The benefits are seen in research that has been available for years, some of it done in America and some of which is quoted in the Government's response. The response to recommendation 12, on page 7, states:

"In one case, for every £1 spent on Early Excellence Centre services for family support, £8 was saved on alternative services."

We should note the money that can be saved when young people do not become involved in offending and crime and when the devastation that results from young people being out of control is avoided.

I welcome the parenting orders introduced by the Government, which are linked to youth offending. However, how much more effective would it be if parents were given support when they first become parents? I note that in both the Select Committee report and the Government's response—I am referring to recommendation 4—it is recommended that

"there should be more support given through the health, social services and education services working together to provide assistance to parents. We recommend that the Government should work with BBC Online and other innovative providers to produce appropriate programmes on parenting."

I do not decry such initiatives, but as the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Turner) said, most people looking for help on parenting are more likely to go to a local source, involving people they know. Such is the advantage of the joint working that is being developed through programmes such as sure start and early excellence centres. Local authorities, education and social services and health are working together. Health visitors are well placed to help parents—their whole approach is one of prevention and support for parents. The removal of the stigma that is often associated with being given advice on how one should parent one's children is hugely important. That is why I am a strong supporter of the sure start initiative.

From the point at which I was selected as a parliamentary candidate, I was anxious to secure a sure start project in my constituency, so I welcome the fact that the Gleadless Valley area is in the process of establishing such a project. We know that the investment will not reach all areas, but we can develop joint working between health, social services and education without having sure start centres in every community.

I would like us to go even further and consider a more imaginative approach such as the one that we tried to implement at an authority where I used to work. If we regard the local school just as a school, it can be quite off-putting to some parents who did not have a good experience of education and do not wish to go to a school to get advice. If, however, from an early stage—I am not talking about a formal curriculum for nought to threes—the local school were regarded not as a school but as the local family centre where services were provided, parents would have a positive experience from the start. By the time that the child started formal education, the barriers would have been broken down and there would be every opportunity for help and support to be given.

On the whole, I welcome the report and I welcome the Government response. However, I want us to get the benefit from it and for that benefit to be spread throughout schools and communities.

3.33 pm

**Charlotte Atkins** (Staffordshire, Moorlands): Early years education has undergone a sea change since 1997. Pre-school education is not now only for the very poor or the well off. The Government's planned approach to early years development has changed all that.

An example from my constituency illustrates the Government's approach. Staffordshire education authority wanted to move some school nursery places from a school in Leek to a more deprived school just up the road. I involved the then Minister for early years education, my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Margaret Hodge), and the end result was a net increase in nursery places. Beresford school, in the most deprived area, received its extra nursery places and that nursery was opened this term, but All Saints school in Leek maintained its places—they were not transferred. Indeed, All Saints, too, opened its new nursery this term, so there has been a net expansion of places. Peter was not robbed to pay Paul because the Labour Government are about expanding quality provision, not closing it down. They are creating partnerships to provide the flexible provision most suited to both working and non-working parents.

Early years education and child care are too vital to leave to chance—the chance that parents will be rich enough to buy good quality private provision or poor enough to qualify for good, free state provision. Since 1996, 126,000 new, free early education places for three and four-year-olds have been made available, and an additional 80,000 new early development places for three-year-olds will be created in the coming year. It is the first time that any Government have made funding available for three-year-olds.

As we move towards universal provision, funding is inevitably and rightly targeted at the most deprived areas—those in most social need. However, that has created some problems in my constituency. Those who live just outside the targeted wards and who are not eligible for free provision have complained that they are being discriminated against. In fact, the reaction of some parents has been extreme: they would prefer that no one received free provision if they cannot have it. That strikes me as the politics of envy, which I do not support. On the positive side, however, it at least demonstrates that parents now recognise the need for early years education, as it provides the essential, quality start for the children. I would be interested in the Minister's reaction to that, because I am sure that the problem exists elsewhere.

In the past, parents did not encounter such problems. Nevertheless, I have met the same problem with education maintenance allowances. Under the previous Government, there were no such allowances for post-16-year-olds, nor was there any expansion in the number of early years places. We have had to live with the legacy of the divisive nursery voucher scheme, which led to

*[Charlotte Atkins]*

competition between playgroups and schools in the provision of early years education, but no expansion in the number of places: the Tories did not have to face that problem. From September 2004, all three-year-olds will have access to a free place, and I am pleased to say that the problem will ultimately disappear. However, in the meantime, local education authorities such as Staffordshire's are trying to meet the Government's tough challenge of expanding quality provision in early years education and in child care.

In my area, private day nurseries are flourishing, which demonstrates that the Government's approach of partnership across the private, voluntary and state sectors is right. Thirty-one potential new nurseries are awaiting registration by Ofsted and 38 are in the process of completing their applications. Child minders are decreasing in number, but I am glad to say that the start-up grant is working well. Last year, 136 new child minders were registered in Staffordshire; that would not have happened but for the start-up grant. The trend is continuing this year, with 40 child minders awaiting Ofsted registration. Another 100 are completing Ofsted registration forms and 90 begin their pre-application training next month. That is encouraging.

Since April 1999, Staffordshire has had nearly 5,000 new out-of-school child care places and nearly 1,300 new full day care places for pre-school children. However, there is one cloud on the horizon—delays caused by Ofsted. Since it took over on 1 September, no new facilities have been registered. That situation may persist until March and could result in the loss of many potential providers, because those people will not be able to wait for very long. Is the Minister aware of these problems, and if so, what is he doing to tackle them? Although I recognise the value of registration—we must ensure that the quality is right—it is important to be aware that in a very low income area such as Staffordshire, people who decide to become child minders or to open early years provision cannot wait for six months on no income for registration.

My constituency has secured a rural sure start pilot project. I campaigned for it, and I was delighted that we got it. However, I was amazed by the reaction of local Conservative councillors—one of them said something to the effect that there is no poverty in rural areas because all the children have bicycles. The reality is different—the challenge in rural areas is to make sure that we can bring early years services to small and isolated communities with poor transport and few community facilities.

After a slow start, the early years team is now working extremely hard. It is involving parents from the beginning, so that the right services are delivered. It is employing a bank of trained staff to serve an area, rather than leaving each village to develop its own staff. That is important because as its children grow up, a village's needs can change—for example, from early years provision to a youth centre. The next issue is to improve venues. Buildings such as church halls, which are used for a multiplicity of purposes, are not necessarily easily adapted to meet the needs of very young children, those aged nought to three. The team is developing sure start venues attached to community halls, which can perform that specialist function. The other vital area is the provision of low cost community transport that can be used by families who do not have their own car. We all know that local bus services are a joke.

I hope that we shall learn from the experience of this rural sure start project and others around the country. They are vital and greatly appreciated. For too long, rural areas have been the poor relations of towns and cities in terms of services, yet their needs are just as great as, if not greater than, those of towns because of the current rural crisis and the isolation that it has created. Many farming and other rural incomes have been badly hit, so many families are on very low incomes—despite the views of some local Conservative councillors. In that respect, the working families tax credit has been a real boon, providing a basic family income and help with child care costs if the parents work.

The local sure start scheme has generated a tremendous amount of enthusiasm, but some disappointment, because some areas were not able to be included. I was especially concerned about one of my most deprived areas, Biddulph East. I was delighted when I discovered recently that it has been included as a small sure start project in the fifth wave. I am grateful to the Minister for having allowed that to happen.

Early years education and child care developments must rate among the Government's biggest success stories, but there is still a long way to go to expand capacity, to provide more training and to create further quality partnerships with early years providers right across the independent, voluntary and state sectors. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Valerie Davey) said, the introduction of a foundation stage combining nursery and reception into one curriculum has been a big step forward. The concentration on providing appropriate high-quality curriculum learning opportunities for early years children, whatever the setting, has alleviated concern about the right age for children to start school. That argument has gone off the boil; if we can provide quality early years provision, there is not such a problem about young children being forced too early into school. The nature of the curriculum and the appropriate way in which to deliver it ensure that children are happy and learning.

More must be done. We must ensure that parents are fully involved, whether they live in rural areas, working class areas, or anywhere else. By parents I mean mothers and fathers, as it is essential that fathers, too, are involved in early years activities. Just the other day, a father told me that his son was not as focused on learning as his daughter. That situation develops because boys do not have role models in early years or primary school who would encourage them to believe that learning is important.

The early years development and child care partnerships that do not meet in public must be made to do so. How can they be accountable and open to scrutiny if they do not meet in public? Those that continue not to meet in public must begin to do so, and the advisers appointed by the Government must ensure that they are helped in that process. We must ensure that staff in the reception years are not pressurised to provide an education structure that is too formal. Many of them feel, either because of parents or because of Ofsted, that they must provide a formal setting. We must give them support to enable children to learn at their own pace and to explore and develop their own skills.

Most of all, however, we must ensure that early years staff are sufficiently well trained, paid and motivated to encourage more high-quality people—men and women—to come into the sector. Those staff should, like teachers, have access to professional development as of right, as the report recommends; otherwise, how can we ensure that we can develop—and, more importantly, maintain—the diverse, innovative and effective early years sector that we so badly need?

3.47 pm

**Mrs. Patsy Calton** (Cheadle): My first experience with early years came as a parent, 18 years ago, when I was a parent-governor. The reception class contained 40 children every afternoon, but I was told that it was perfectly all right for children's formal work to be done in the mornings and that they could play in the afternoons—as if formal work and play could be separated for children of reception age. I took advice from lecturers at Manchester Metropolitan university, which was then Manchester polytechnic, and the British Association for Early Childhood Education. I developed an interest in that age group, which, as a secondary school teacher, I had not encountered before. More recently, I have been chair of social services in Stockport.

I read the Select Committee report with great interest. The decision to extend the age group covered down to birth is an excellent one, and further work needs to be done in that area. The suggestion that parents need to be taken more seriously is wise. My son and his wife live in a sure start area and their baby is having the benefit of that programme, which I commend to anyone. However, it is clear from the report and my experience that training is one of the most important and necessary aspects of improving the work that is done with children in that age group. It is not good enough to leave children of that age to untrained staff.

Ofsted's expectations tend to formalise the curriculum for the age group. We in this country have a lot of obstacles to overcome. Victorian attitudes of strictness with children prevail and, at times, it is almost as though kindness is an aberration to be eradicated. It is essential that everyone involved in early years education understands the importance of play. I applaud the recommendation that children below compulsory school age should be taught informally and I think that it should go further. Some people think that the word "informally" means anything goes, but anyone who has ever been in a nursery class or group knows that it means anything but anything goes.

I applaud the money that is now going into early years—as I said, my son, his wife and their baby are beneficiaries of it—but it does not go far enough. My constituency of Cheadle is in Stockport, where more than half the poverty and need lies outside the four wards designated as being in most need. If we focus on those four wards, children who desperately need support will not receive it. I go further and say that inappropriately formalised assessment, to which the report refers, is leading children to believe that they are failures at an early age. That applies to children not only from deprived areas but from areas that are clearly not deprived.

**Mrs. Eleanor Laing** (Epping Forest): If assessment is not carried out at key stages—even early key stages—how can a parent, teacher or anyone else involved in the education of small children know how much the children can do, so that difficulties that must be addressed early can be picked up?

**Mrs. Calton:** Of course assessment must take place—it is important. The problem is formalised assessment, especially when it is based on formal teaching methods and learning.

The report mentions insufficient physical exercise. I firmly believe that young children need play that involves big movements, not just small movements or little pen-writing movements. They need to be able to use their arms and bodies and to roll over and over. They need to take part in physical activity with other children, but that cannot happen if children are sitting in small places. They must have more space in which to let off steam and to learn how their bodies work. Too often, outdoor play is funded solely by parental fundraising—it is treated as though it were an optional extra that can be added later, but outdoor play is vital because children learn big physical movements first and fine motor control comes much later.

As an ex-teacher, I have had my own share of Ofsted and the stress that it causes is extreme and rubs off on children. To my mind, there is nothing worse than a young child being subjected to a teacher who is frightened and stressed by the idea of Ofsted. In my experience as a chair of social services, the model wherein the social services inspectorate works with social services departments and social workers is far better because it is consultative and informative. There is no use of the big stick. It is much better than the education model.

During the 18 years that have elapsed since I was a parent-governor, understanding of how young children learn has greatly improved. Sadly, that knowledge has not got through to all the places where it is needed, which extend far further than deprived areas. All our children need the work of the report.

3.55 pm

**Mr. Jonathan Shaw** (Chatham and Aylesford): I congratulate the former Select Committee on its excellent report, which has played an important part in the education debate as well as in influencing the Government's education policy, which, from the Committee's point of view, is more important.

One example of that is baseline assessment, which is an important way of benchmarking children in primary education. The report recommended that such assessment should take place in year one, and I understand that pilots are taking place for that. Each local authority area has a different baseline assessment, which is something to which we need a formalised approach. However, if we have baseline assessments at the beginning of year 1, they should not be published and become another league table—in this case, detailing how children are developing on the basis of one year's experience at school.

The report has been well received by practitioners in the field. I have spoken to many people who have read it, and they support its recommendations. I have briefly

*[Mr. Jonathan Shaw]*

been in the luxurious position of being able to associate myself with the praise that it has received. Furthermore, when I speak to people who disagree with its findings, I can say, "Of course, I was not on the Select Committee when it was written." This is the one time when I can have it both ways. Practitioners have welcomed the report, and I am grateful to the early years staff at Medway council whom I met recently to discuss parts of it.

The report begins:

"A quiet revolution has been taking place in the education of children".

It certainly has. In the Medway towns in 2000, there were 291 pre-school places for three-year-olds; now there are 2,366. That is an enormous change that has delivered for families who are my constituents. The focus has been on tackling deprivation. The early years programme should not be about light touch; it should be about intervention. Such intervention to help parents is not patronising. I am of the Heseltine school of thought—let us intervene at the breakfast club, the lunch club and the tea club. That is the support that parents say they want. They want to be involved in shaping early years facilities, programmes and services.

We should assist parents in learning both new ways to develop their relationships with their children and different ways of play. We know from the research that was presented to the Committee that such relationship-building is critical to the social and educational attainment of youngsters, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Finding the right keys to engage parents in new ways of caring for, and playing with, their children is not easy—it requires practitioners to show innovation and skill—but it can be done. Great strides have been made, not least with the sure start programme.

I am delighted to have a sure start programme in Chatham, and I recently met some of its staff. They mentioned one of the innovative ways in which they were encouraging parents to touch their children. They had organised immensely popular baby massage classes. Some parents had never experienced such touch with their baby. Such engagement can sow the seeds of better relationship building. It can progress to help with reading. If parents can engage their children in such ways, their education and social development are likely to be improved.

Not every area has the benefit of a sure start programme, as the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mrs. Calton) mentioned. We have to find other ways to support parents and provide finance in regions outside the sure start area. A brief from the Royal National Institute for the Blind examined how parents of children with disabilities from a very wide area could access the specialisms and benefits that come from the understandably targeted sure start programmes. The challenge is not easy, but I am sure that the Minister will address it when he winds up.

Getting parents engaged early with their children does not have to be rocket science. Research from the Bookstart programme that Sainsbury's supported—sadly the funding for it for the next couple of years has hit the rocks—demonstrated that giving books at the nine-month health-check that parents have with their children led to more parents taking their children to libraries. There was improved quality in the relationship between parents and their children. Such things are fundamental to tackling issues that arise from deprivation.

Increasing the quantity of child care provision must go hand in hand with improving its quality. I will later discuss child minders and the inspection process, which is now under the auspices of Ofsted, or Oftot, as it is sometimes called. However, I will first mention that to create diversity and quality in child care, we have to meet some of the challenges set out by the Daycare Trust. It is important that pay, qualifications and therefore status are raised for those who provide this service to children. For too long, it has been seen as "women's work" and been poorly paid. That is still largely the case. We need to encourage more men into the service. Only 1.5 per cent. of all pre-school leaders and 3 per cent. of nursery nurses are men. Only 17 per cent. of primary school teachers—a group that, perhaps, Members of Parliament have had more experience of—are men. For many children, that means a lack of positive role models.

**Mr. Sheerman:** Male role models.

**Mr. Shaw:** I thank my hon. Friend for interrupting me. It is important that children have positive male role models, especially when they are from backgrounds in which they have experienced domestic violence, or there has been no male role model at all. The Government could send messages to the gatekeepers—the colleges and careers tutors—about communicating the possibility of child care as a career for young men.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** An obstacle to young men taking part in education, especially that of very young children, can be fear. That extends throughout the education system, but in the case of young children, there can be unnecessary fear and an inappropriate suspicion of motives.

**Mr. Shaw:** That is a reasonable point. In recent articles, some people have talked positively about how parents react to seeing a young man in the day care centre, but others say that they have been physically threatened, by fathers who perhaps feel undermined, and accused of being child abusers. The way to get over that is for male carers to become more common, rather than the exception that they now are. The more men in child care and early years, the better. That will break down some of the prejudices.

Ofsted is now responsible for the inspection and registration of nurseries, playgroups and child minders. During consideration of the Care Standards Bill, I expressed the worry that we would remove an important informal network from the social services and child protection system. I repeatedly asked the Minister for Lifelong Learning whether inspection officers would work in isolation—a point that greatly concerned the trade unions at the time—but she did not give a clear answer. However, it is clear from talking to staff from Medway and other local authority areas that inspection officers are indeed working in isolation. That removes an informal network of social workers and teachers that is important for child protection.

There has been a shortage of child minders, but the new set-up grant has led to a considerable increase in numbers, certainly in my area. Moreover, it is bringing together child care networks and enabling nursery funding for three and four-year-olds. That is good for child minding, and also offers diversity and choice.

The Government have made great strides. There has been a revolution and the feedback from my constituents is certainly positive. During the general election campaign, free child care and the working families tax credit proved an enduring theme. However, I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will not rest on his laurels, and we will chase him to achieve even better standards in early years care.

**Mr. Peter Pike (in the Chair):** For clarity, let me say that I intend to call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson at about 4.50 pm. Although Front Benchers do not of course need to stand to catch my eye, other hon. Members do.

4.8 pm

**Angela Watkinson** (Upminster): I want to introduce the issue of special needs in early years, and I begin by reading a paragraph from the response from the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers to the report:

"The early identification of special educational needs is essential and must be accompanied by adequate resources that will enable those needs to be fully met, ensuring appropriate provision and intervention, in order to enable all children to make the best possible progress. Not all children will be able to 'catch up' and many will have severe and complex learning needs that will require long-term support. There are also implications for the demands on other qualified professionals working in areas providing that support."

These days, most reception teachers will identify in their first term at least half a dozen children with special needs. Some of those needs derive from a lack of the normal home and family experiences. Such children may come from homes that do not have books. Perhaps they have not been exposed to children's literature, from Little Red Riding Hood to Harry Potter. They may not have had nursery rhymes sung to them. They may not even have been exposed to normal conversation sitting round a table and eating with the family, so they have poor development of language and other social skills. They may not have had the normal counting games that parents usually introduce to their children when they are dressing, such as counting shoes or buttons. Those children will be able to catch up once they go to school and experience the whole range of things that teachers put in front of them.

Other children have learning difficulties and may never be able to catch up. For example, they may have chronic illness that has taken up much of their early years in hospital visits or has made them unable to join in robust forms of play with other children owing to their being more protected, thus delaying their development. They may have physical or mental impairment that necessitates special educational provision. There is a wide spectrum of need: the one thing that one cannot do with special needs children is generalise about them. We need to offer them a wide choice of provision. There is a case for introducing as many such children as possible into mainstream, with the proper support. However, some will never be able to survive in mainstream schools, so I make a plea for the retention of the special school in the range of options available to parents.

I have deep concerns about a policy of total inclusion. Inclusion may be appropriate for some children—if not at the beginning of their education, at some time subsequently—but some will always need the protective environment of a special school. I should like to tell hon. Members about a child at the school where I spent many years, who had brittle bones—a very fragile but quite intelligent child, who, after many years in a special school, was transferred to mainstream at her and her parents' request. I am going back to the 1980s, when the policy of putting special needs children into mainstream school with support was in its infancy. The child had acquired a large measure of independence in her special school, and when she went to mainstream the other children and the teachers were so overprotective that she lost some of that independence. It is a complex matter: each individual child must be looked at carefully and the appropriate provision chosen.

I was concerned recently to learn that a special needs nursery in my constituency which usually had about 20 pupils referred to it each year had no children referred to it this September. This morning I heard that a consultation procedure is in progress for the closure of the nursery. It is ironic that in the same area a sure start programme is in preparation. I hope that the consultation procedure will take account of all the objections that arise.

I end by quoting a paragraph from a letter by the special children editor of the *Teaching Times*:

"There is still a great deal of confusion about what 'inclusion' means: for some people, the term is synonymous with mainstreaming, for others it signifies the consideration of a child's specific needs and how best to meet them, by using a wide range of provision. For policy-makers and senior managers, it often comes down to what is practicable within the existing system and budgetary constraints."

We are faced, as ever, with the compromise between idealism and reality. I leave hon. Members with that thought.

4.14 pm

**Judy Mallaber** (Amber Valley): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

**Mr. Peter Pike (in the Chair):** Order. I am Mr. Pike, not Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Judy Mallaber:** My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Charlotte Atkins) and I were just having a debate about that, Mr. Pike: I am glad that you have put us right. She put it to me that you would not mind being promoted to Mr. Deputy Speaker, but might be offended if you were wrongly called Mr. Pike—and we got it wrong. We now know for future reference.

I, too, welcome the report, its recommendations and the positive tone of the Government's response. I would not be doing justice to the wonderful work done in Derbyshire, if I did not speak in this debate. Much has been achieved, and we are exceeding many of the recommendations in the report and many of the

*[Judy Mallaber]*

Government's targets. That is not to say that more is not needed, but we have done enormous amounts of work and the early years sector is being transformed.

I have one quibble with my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman): I have attended the meetings of our early years partnership and they are lively, energetic and imaginative. Those at the meeting cross all sectors, and are active and supportive. Its chair is one of my local county councillors, who is inspirational. I am glad that Ministers have backtracked slightly and that people are not being excluded because they are county councillors. Similarly, the excellent early years and child care unit in the county is based at the county council. Its work is outstanding. Although concerns are understandable, we should not dismiss the fact much has been achieved through co-operation.

My one party political point is that during this year's county council elections, our county council Labour group made much of the work and the £11 million spent, while the Conservatives completely forgot about it—they did not even mention it. I cannot remember how much the Liberal Democrats said, but it was not a noticeable amount.

Some of the most interesting projects that I have been involved in have been associated with early years. I visited Alfreton nursery, which is now a beacon nursery, and talked to the person running it about her work with parents to identify and assess all the children as they arrived at nursery. They could identify problems children might have, their weaknesses and where problems might develop later when they start to learn to read. It was inspirational to see that wonderful work.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Turner) might have been less worried about child minders being put off training had he been in Chesterfield with me a couple of years ago when I gave awards to a huge roomful of child minders who had achieved accreditation when Derbyshire became the first area to have a nationally accredited network for child minders from the National Childminding Association. Our child minders do some great work, and they took pride and pleasure at receiving recognition for their work, at being recognised as professionals with expertise, and at being given further professional support and help. It was wonderful to see.

Our child minders receive much help, such as training that exceeds the Government recommendations. They get support from qualified early years teachers. We now have 34 accredited child minders who receive grant funding for their work with three and four-year-olds. They also have a toy library. We have a flourishing child minders network, although there is always more to be done.

Some issues are relevant to both child minders and other early years practitioners. We have made progress with early years, at national level and in areas such as my constituency. We must not lose impetus on the practical issues and we must further improve in future. Our child minders have the same access to any training courses advertised in the county's training directory as all early years practitioners in the county. Locally, I think that the budget for training is regarded as generous but, in a spread-out rural area, the costs of administration to make training accessible are greater than the 5 per cent. allowed in the budget. We found that people were not attending courses and that there were many cancellations owing to travel problems. Courses have now been set up in places where people want them, such as local village halls, and they have been inundated with requests from early years workers. However, that costs money to organise in a wide geographical area.

During the past year in Derbyshire, teenage mothers have been entitled to 20 hours of child care, and receive an allocated carer before birth. That was implemented in advance of recommendations and pilots from the Government. I have not been able to check whether we receive funding for that, although I suspect that we lose out because we were ahead of the field. I ask the Minister to examine that.

A further matter has been raised with me about qualified teacher involvement. A 1:10 ratio is recommended, and early years partnerships were asked to examine how that could be done. In Derbyshire, the involvement of qualified teachers, which was extended broadly, means that our level of satisfactory or better than satisfactory Ofsted reports in all sectors is above the national average. For example, more than 96 per cent. of Derbyshire's private day nurseries receive a satisfactory or better than satisfactory report compared with the 88 per cent. national average. In playgroups, our level is 83 per cent., compared with 79 per cent. nationally.

The 1:10 target for qualified teacher involvement is welcome, and we wish to achieve that. Unfortunately, the support is not ring-fenced, and if an area suffers as we have because of our education standard spending assessments and how we do not do as well as more prosperous counties—we hope to win the arguments yet—the money must be obtained from other sources. I hope that the Minister will examine that, too.

On sure start, I echo the thanks to the Government from my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands. We argued, during the early period, that spread-out areas did not meet criteria that could be met only in urban areas. We were pleased, in round two, when there was an extension to rural areas and we were given the ability to link villages. That enabled us to extend the scheme to Bolsover and North-East Derbyshire, as well as Chesterfield, which is more urban. This year, we will extend to Amber Valley and Erewash, and we have pilot small schemes in High Peak and South Derbyshire, one of which involves only one estate. Where there are pockets of deprivation, our schemes must fit what is needed, not the original programmes. I am pleased that Ministers have responded to that.

A further problem is the sustainability of projects. The report said little about out-of-school clubs and breakfast clubs, although they affect the early years. In Derbyshire, we have done outstandingly well at an early stage, and received £3 million from the new opportunities fund for 1,000 places. However, two clubs in my constituency would fit the criteria to move, for sustainability, from one-year to three-year funding. However, as the clubs went in too early they were past the seven to eight-month period during which they could access funding. We have had to scrabble for funding to maintain excellent breakfast and out-of-school clubs in my area, in the most deprived places. I visited a breakfast club in my constituency, and the head came

out to tell us the wonderful effect of the club on children's learning when they get to school, because they have had their breakfast and they settle down. We must not be penalised because we were ahead of the game, and I appeal for that not to happen.

Owing to expansion, one of the main difficulties and pressures is how to get sufficiently qualified staff. I ask for further emphasis to be put on the learning and skills councils about the ambitious targets that they were set for NVQ 2 and 3 training. It is difficult to find sufficient people to meet the expansion that is required in the sector. It ties into pay and conditions, and I welcome recommendation 33, which concerns equitable pay. One of my local early years development workers put it to me that the main barriers to recruitment in the child care work force is lack of status and low pay: it is often possible to earn more working at Sainsbury's than in the child care sector. Many hon. Members are familiar with the problems that playgroups have faced in managing to meet even minimum wage levels. That matter will be addressed in the future, as things develop.

I have not raised those points to criticise, but to emphasise that they must be examined, and that they will need to be tackled if further progress is to be made.

Practical problems are arising in involving the private sector in neighbourhood nurseries when income is not guaranteed. For instance, it might be desirable and appropriate to establish a neighbourhood nursery in an area that already has an infants school with an attached nursery class, and therefore that school is already receiving some of the funding for children aged between three and four years. That is another matter that must be addressed.

The report is excellent and progressive and I think that all hon. Members will welcome its recommendations. An enormous amount has been done. Like many other hon. Members who have spoken, I have found early years education to be an inspirational area with which to be involved. The Committee has addressed a number of practical problems, but at every place that I visited, I encountered a win-win situation. That holds true for all early years settings: there is always real achievement and real progress, with children doing wonderfully well, and adults committed to their work, and that provides a fantastic foundation for the lives of our children.

However, the impetus must not be lost. The recommendations must be implemented. The practical problems must be taken on board and dealt with, and it is important to ensure that hon. Members and the general public raise them with Ministers. If that is done, it will provide a wonderful stepping stone for even more progress to be achieved in the future.

4.27 pm

**Mr. Gregory Barker** (Bexhill and Battle): In the interests of openness, I want to start my speech by declaring an interest: I have three children aged between seven months and six years, so children's early years are dear to my heart.

I welcome the work that has gone into producing this comprehensive report and the cross-party consensus regarding the importance of the pre-school years and environment. However, I do not underestimate the disappointment that is felt by parents and families up and down the country about the unadulterated failure of the Labour party's million-place pledge, made in 1998-99. During that year, child care provision fell: compared with the figures for the previous 12 months, 45,800 places and 12,900 providers were lost. The report's ambition should not cause hon. Members to forget the reality of the situation, which is that there is an increasing scarcity of good-quality child care.

My role as a father has taught me the value of pre-school activities. My son has been extremely lucky: when we lived abroad, in Moscow, he attended an international kindergarten, and he was the only English child in his class. That gave him a unique window on the world. It was an important learning experience and opened his mind to possibilities outside his own little world. When he returned to England, his handwriting was less good than that of his London-based peer group, but that was of little consequence when measured against the rewarding experience of making friends of so many nationalities, and of opening up his mind. He is now six, and his handwriting has caught up, but the advantages of experiencing that special environment at an early age will never leave him.

I commend the remarks of the hon. Members for Chatham and Aylesford (Mr. Shaw) and for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Charlotte Atkins) about the importance of male role models. When my son returned home from his first day at school, I asked him how it had gone. He said that it had been terrific, and that his teacher was like Action Man. It immediately engaged his interest to have a male teacher. I have encountered some remarkable vocational male teachers, and more of them are needed.

Having seen my child in an unusual pre-school environment, I am absolutely committed to diversity and parental involvement in the pre-school environment. All too often, uniformity—especially if it is imposed from the centre—can be the enemy of creativity in very young people. We must do all that we can to keep off the straitjacket of uniformity.

By far the most important qualification that we can look for in those to whom we entrust the care of our young children is enthusiasm and an affinity with their charges. We must remember that early years education is not only a stepping stone to primary school or later life but a period to be enjoyed, relished and cherished by both parents and young children. Our most important wish for those who provide such care as well as for our children is that they be happy and confident.

I want briefly to warn against the causes behind the sad and depressing fall in the number of day care places. Much of the Government's failure to provide more places is due to the fact that private provision is decreasing. Regulation upon regulation, red tape and bureaucracy, which afflict all small businesses and increasingly the hard-pressed voluntary sector, are making the provision more difficult to operate.

Clearly, a balance must be struck between giving people operational freedom and monitoring those who are in charge of young people. Guidelines on smacking, smoking, sharing best practice and involving parents in such activities and targeting areas of social exclusion, all of which are contained in the report, are greatly welcomed, but I cannot but recoil at the notion of a curriculum for the under-threes as suggested earlier by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman).

*[Mr. Gregory Barker]*

In our determination to drive up opportunities and standards, we must be careful that this constructive debate does not send out a wrong message to the brilliant and dedicated pre-school teachers in this country. We are extremely lucky to have so many people involved in looking after young people. We need more, but I recognise that great teachers do not necessarily have NVQs or formal qualifications and that the ability to teach, to care and to stimulate young people is a vocation. It should be nurtured, appreciated and, at all points, talked up.

4.33 pm

**Jeff Ennis** (Barnsley, East and Mexborough): I thank you, for giving me the opportunity to contribute in this afternoon's important debate Mr. Pike. I wish first to remind hon. Members of the nature of my constituency, because that moulds my views on early years issues. My constituency has the lowest level of gross domestic product per capita of any in the United Kingdom. That is a direct consequence of the forced closure in the early 1990s of our one staple industry, coal mining. Barnsley and Doncaster councils are still coming to terms with that and are doing everything in their power to regenerate the local economy. It is no wonder that both Barnsley and Doncaster form part of the wider South Yorkshire objective 1 funding area.

There is no doubt that the impact of deprivation on a child's life chances, particularly in the early years, can be enormous, and should not be underestimated. What must be welcomed in the report on the expanding provision of early years education is that it must be based on quality, with greater emphasis needing to be placed on better training and enhanced qualifications. That has been particularly welcomed by the relevant trade unions. Many recommendations in the report refer to the central role played by parents in a child's educational development. Positively engaging parents throughout the whole of a child's school life is the key to improving educational standards at all levels. That is important particularly in the early years. Many parents physically take their children to the nursery or child care unit each day. We must make the most of that early direct contact with the parent and try to maintain it throughout the child's school life.

Many people are only now beginning to recognise the crucial role that early years and child care can play in trying to regenerate places such as Barnsley and Doncaster. The national child care strategy is a key aspect of regeneration, with twin aims. The first is to raise standards of attainment in schools by the provision of high-quality pre-school or nursery education for all children, and the second is to increase the quality and quantity of child care available, which would enable parents to re-enter the employment and training market. Both those aims are crucial, and especially relevant to Barnsley and Doncaster.

Nursery provision in Barnsley and Doncaster, in common with many metropolitan councils, has always been good in the maintained sector but relatively weak in the private and voluntary sectors. Using single regeneration budget money, two new maintained nurseries were built in Barnsley between 1997 and 1998 to ensure universal provision for all four-year-olds. However, in recognition of the imbalance between sectors, the Barnsley early years partnership agreed that all future expansion should be targeted outside the maintained sector to encourage choice and diversity—a strategy that I fully support.

Low levels of attainment in the work force are constantly cited as a major barrier to attracting employment to the Barnsley borough. However, standardised scores of children entering reception classes show that Barnsley children consistently score above national averages in key areas that correlate highly with subsequent performance. Widespread nursery provision in Barnsley and its high quality are therefore having a demonstrable impact on standards.

More than a third of the work force in Barnsley have child care responsibilities, yet fewer than 5 per cent. can access a registered child care place. Such a shortfall in child care availability clearly represents a considerable barrier to parents accessing employment. Many parents can therefore access only low-paid shift work to fit around their partners' work patterns, which has a direct effect on economics and the social well-being of all families. The Barnsley early years partnership has set the target of doubling the provision of places to 10 per cent. by 2004, which is realistic.

In areas of chronic deprivation with high levels of social exclusion, child care should be used to enable capacity building of communities, especially the former mining communities. Such programmes must be viewed and funded differently so that parents can develop the skills and confidence to enter the employment market.

Provision of child care must be viewed as supporting other regeneration activity rather an as an end in itself. Early years partnerships must be steered by key initiatives such as objective 1 and the neighbourhood renewal strategy to develop appropriate child care in response to local need and emergent economic growth. As yet, insufficient links exist to ensure that. In Barnsley, the early years partnership acts as a sub-group of the Barnsley learning partnership, which is one of the four strategic goal groups feeding into the Barnsley forum, the local strategic partnership. The infrastructure exists to ensure the links, but they need further development. That is true of areas other than Barnsley and Doncaster.

The SRB 3 programme in Barnsley delivered several high-class programmes, such as right start, to support parents in their role as primary educators. Such programmes empowered parents as educators, but also provided them with a key gateway to return to education and training. New funding regimes, such as objective 1, will not fund those programmes in the future. Fixed-term regeneration funding should be used to fund programmes to bring about fundamental change in the short term. The balance between core and externally funded activity must therefore be reviewed. It is unfortunate that objective 1 cannot be used for sure start programmes in areas such as Barnsley and Doncaster.

Coincidentally, a local newspaper, the *Barnsley Chronicle*, has produced a 20-page colour supplement entitled "first class", which supports the local

partnership in furthering the objectives of the early years partnership. An article entitled "Setting out on the path of learning" states:

"Starting school is a milestone for every child and family.

In the last few weeks, hundreds of children have stepped over one of the most important thresholds of life.

No doubt they found it exciting to wear their school uniform, meet their first teacher and open their first school book.

Also to feel something special when asked to carry out their first school task.

Starting school is another part of the growing up procedure."

On the opposite page, a big advertisement states that the early years development and child care team would

"like to hear from you if

You are thinking of setting up any kind of childcare provision

You want to work with children

You are already working with children, and wish to access training".

It then gives the national freephone number. It is nice to have the support of the local media on issues that involve partnership.

The report is excellent. I commend the Committee for it, and I hope that the Government will accept many, if not all, of its recommendations

4.42 pm

**Mr. Kerry Pollard** (St. Albans): I commend the report. I was on the Committee for one day, so I obviously had a huge impact on the outcome.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Mr. Shaw) reminded me of my early years with my seven children. I have probably changed more nappies and wiped more noses than anyone else in the Chamber. He was right about bonding for fathers—it is critical. I remember bathing my children and often getting in the bath with them, although that is not very PC nowadays. Those were joyous times: there was lots of fun, lots of splashing about and lots of telling off from my wife afterwards because of the mess in the bathroom. Never mind, it was good stuff, and it is vital for fathers and their children.

All the policy and educational reasons for concentrating on early years have been well rehearsed by hon. Members who are more expert than me. I want to highlight two examples of excellence from my constituency. The first is a new nursery class, which opened at the school to which all seven of my children went. There was no nursery then, and I bitterly regret that they did not have the advantages that children do now. The head teacher, Yvonne Hawkes, beavered away for years to get a nursery class. She put in bids again and again, which were rejected. However, one was recently accepted and the nursery class was built and is now working perfectly. My only regret is that my children were not able to attend it. It is already making a big impact on the school and the local community.

My second example is the St. Albans children's centre, which is one of only 18 such centres of excellence in the country. We are proud that we got the money for it. I cannot say that St. Albans, which is the fourth wealthiest town in the land, is deprived, but we have areas of deprivation, as every town does. It is important that that was recognised and the centre was built.

The centre is unique because all the agencies are represented there: education, health and social services. The centre has a full range of facilities: paediatricians, child psychologists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and many others. There is also the Muriel Green nursery school, which is thriving and full. One innovation is the setting up of the St. Albans opportunity class, which is a specialist nursery for children with difficult needs who cannot go into any other nursery provision. They need one-to-one relationships, with one child to one helper. That system works well, and those children could not be catered for in any other location. Our Government put the money in, drawing on the budgets for health and social services.

There are also 90 child care places, providing care for neglected children in our community—that, too, is working well. Early years provision is working well in my constituency. It is an investment in our children that is worth every penny.

4.45 pm

**Chris Grayling** (Epsom and Ewell): I start by paying tribute to the Committee for producing such a comprehensive report. There is general consensus throughout the Chamber that this area is hugely important and that the work of those who perform the various roles in early years education is enormously valuable. I have seen that in my constituency and am sure that other hon. Members have seen it in theirs. That consensus on early years has been noticeable in the initiatives that both this Government and the previous Conservative Government created, albeit from different political perspectives, to strengthen the provision of early years education in this country.

I want to add a cautionary note about the dangers of over-bureaucratising early years education. All too often, in the primary and secondary school sectors, we have seen the consequences for the management of schools and for the ability to recruit teachers of imposing too many bureaucratic guidelines, too much paperwork and too much of a structure on those who run educational organisations. In many cases, early years provision is run on a shorter shoestring than full schools, so it would be a mistake to attempt to impose too many rules and regulations.

One example of that tendency is the trend towards certification of those who work in early years education. It is clearly desirable that those who look after the youngest of our children should have educational qualifications, when possible and appropriate. However, there is a great army of volunteers who may not be in that position. My wife has spent several terms with four-year-olds in schools, helping them to read and learn about computers, and other mothers throughout the country have done the same. It would be a shame to lose the services of the gifted amateur in early years education because we over-regulate for certification.

There is a danger of over-legislation in several areas. The Select Committee Chairman at the start of this debate referred to the need for joined-up government. We must ensure that the consequences of legislation intended for different matters do not force out of existence pre-school groups of whatever kind.

**Mr. Andrew Selous** (South-West Bedfordshire): Is my hon. Friend aware that, although the provision of child

*[Mr. Andrew Selous]*

care has a zero rating for VAT, the erection of nursery buildings does not? Given what he said about joined-up government, should not Customs and Excise liaise with the Minister's Department to remedy the situation?

**Chris Grayling:** My hon. Friend makes a valuable point about the need to ensure that different Departments provide the right support to this sector.

Other hon. Members have mentioned the need to avoid getting children to do too much, too young. Many other countries do not start children's formal education until they are six years old. In this country, all too often, children who are barely beyond their fourth birthday are in mainstream schools. For some that is a success—some flourish in that environment, but some do not. I have seen that at first hand. We must be careful about formalising education for the young.

**Charlotte Atkins:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that children do not have to be in a formal setting simply because they are in a mainstream school? It is perfectly possible for a reception class to provide the appropriate lack of formality that exists in other settings.

**Chris Grayling:** I agree with the hon. Lady. Some local education authorities manage a well-thought-out system, in which there is a staggered intake. Children may start the term after their birthday and work only in the morning, going home at lunchtime. In other LEAs, that does not happen. I would like there to be informalisation both for pre-school and reception to meet children's needs. That is tremendously important. We must not get children to do too much, too young.

One cautionary note that I would sound about the reports is that I have read too little about the role of parents. The Select Committee rightly points out the importance of the contribution that parents make to the education and development of their children. When I read the Government's response, I was concerned that it was about parental contribution to the assessment of pupil needs and so forth but perhaps did not acknowledge the fact that parents' role starts in the home. Parents are often the most important pre-school teachers. I should like to see much more done—through all aspects of our legislation, our tax system and our benefits system—to ensure a balance between the clear and obvious needs of those parents who both have to go out to work and who need pre-school support for their children, and those in families where one stays at home to develop the children in their early years. Will the Minister please ensure that that balance exists in future legislation?

**Mr. Shaw:** In his list of scenarios, the hon. Gentleman did not refer to the single mother or the teenage mother living in a bedsit. Many Labour Members have referred to the sure start programme, which engages such people, who might not have had the positive parenting experiences that have been referred to. Does he welcome the aspects of the report that are covered by sure start, and my other remarks?

**Chris Grayling:** I recognise the diversity of parents' needs. All too often, support goes to those who need to go out to work and there is not enough directed towards those who choose to stay at home with their children. I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I am saying that there is often a dimension missing.

I began my political career, and my family life, in the London borough of Merton, where, some 20 years ago, the Conservative party was a pathfinder in managing the introduction of nursery places for all pupils in the borough. That has been a tremendous success, and my own children benefited from it. Those benefits should be shared by children elsewhere. This is a crucial area. Governments and political parties of all persuasions need to continue to invest effort in finding ways to improve such provision in this country.

4.52 pm

**Paul Holmes** (Chesterfield): Although I am a member of the Select Committee, I am speaking today on behalf of the Liberal Democrat education spokesman, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate and Knaresborough (Mr. Willis), who was called away on urgent business.

The Select Committee's report is very good. I can say that without fear of being accused of bias, because it was produced before I even entered Parliament, let alone joined the Committee. It highlights many of the problems in the Government's strategy for the early years and provides some excellent comments and suggestions for improvement. If only the same could be said of the Government's response.

That is not to say that the Government have not done much good work in the area. The expansion of early years education since 1997 has done much to meet the Liberal Democrats' often-stated goal of access to free, high-quality education for all three and four-year-olds whose parents wish it. Note the use of the phrase "high-quality". I shall return to that in detail. We still have some serious concerns about the quality of provision. We support the replacement of the desirable learning outcomes with the early learning goals and the establishment of the foundation stage—and in particular, its applicability to all children in the reception year. We are glad that the Government are putting in place resources to fund in-service training of practitioners although, once again, there are issues about the effective targeting of such resources and the implications for primary schools of the foundation stage.

Liberal Democrats welcome the establishment of the early years development and child care partnerships. We have long argued for the integration of care and education for children under five, and the partnerships are proving, as we thought they would, an effective vehicle for movement towards that integration.

However, the Government should be aware that there are considerable problems in the operation of some of the partnerships. My information is that local authorities are not always enthusiastic in their support for partnerships. In many cases, there is not enough funding to support the infrastructure for an effective early years and child care policy. How many hon. Members know, for instance, that lead partnership officers often have to cope with more than 40 funding streams for the implementation of their plans? How many of those people have been driven to the point of a nervous breakdown by the load being placed on them?

I do not wish to criticise the principle, because it is a sound one, nor do I want to criticise the enthusiastic implementation by the Department for Education and Skills, whose efforts are widely appreciated. However, I criticise the complexity of the burden and the lack of resources, which will hamper its successful implementation. If an unenthusiastic local authority is required to set up and maintain the bureaucracy from its rate support grant, it will do so unwillingly and with as little cost to its budget as possible. Evidence suggests that that is the case in far too many authorities.

With my background in education—I have been a teacher for the past 22 years and a local government councillor for 11 years—I am sympathetic to the plight of councils with overstretched budgets that are under ever increasing pressure. As a Liberal Democrat, I am loth to argue for more centralisation, but a strong case can be made for increasing the central grant for the funding of early years development and child care plans to enable much better implementation throughout the country. That is not to say that there are no success stories. A willing local authority can work wonders. I know that excellent work is being done in Oxfordshire, in Brighton and Hove and in West Sussex. I am sure that many other authorities could be included in that list, but too many do not have the will and the service suffers as a result.

Another related matter impinges on the problem. The partnerships are under a duty to produce the plan, but it is the LEA's job to fund it. That produces tensions that can sometimes lead to severe curtailment of the plans and a reduction of morale among the partnership support officers. They often feel caught between two stools—between the partnerships and the authority. That situation must be clarified if progress is to be made. The partnerships are representative of virtually all the interest groups in the area, but they have no democratic base—representatives are appointed by each interest group and by the authority—which can result in a clash between the democratically elected authority and the non-elected partnership. That principle must be revisited in order to clarify the responsibilities of the partnerships and the authorities.

The most glaring abdication of responsibility in the Government's response to the Select Committee report has been touched on only once today. I refer to smoking and smacking. The Committee was clear in its view. It stated:

"We recommend that no childminder should be allowed to smack any child in their care".

Again, the Committee said:

"We recommend that no childminder should be permitted to smoke in the presence of any child in their care".

What was the Government's response? They retreated behind the defence of public opinion. I shudder to think what sort of society we would have if every time a moral issue had to be considered we acted on what we perceived to be public opinion. For a start, we would be hanging those convicted of capital crimes.

In any case, there is no consistency in the Government's stand. It is a criminal offence for a teacher to smack a child of statutory school age. Why, therefore, is it not the same for very young children, who are probably more at risk? No teacher is permitted to smoke in front of children. Indeed, many schools, including the one where I last worked, do not allow anyone to smoke on the premises. Why should we allow smoking to take place in the presence of those very young children, who are even more impressionable and whose health is more vulnerable?

Many parents actively want teachers to use physical violence on their children—or they would not object if it were to take place, as I was often told at parents evenings at the three schools in Derbyshire where I taught. However, the law does not allow it. The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Judy Mallaber), another Derbyshire Member, will know that that local education authority was one of the first to abolish corporal punishment in its schools in the early 1980s, some years before the Conservative Government made it national policy. Why then allow physical violence against the very young that cannot be inflicted on older pupils? We would strongly oppose any move to reintroduce corporal punishment in schools or to allow teachers to smoke in front of their pupils. We oppose the Government's response just as strongly, as it completely ignores the Select Committee's recommendations. At best, the response is ill advised; at worst, it is moral cowardice. It must change.

I want to deal with the quality of provision of care and education for the very young. Quality was always going to be a problem when such a rapid expansion took place. It was never going to be easy to deal with that problem, but if we do not get the quality right in the early years we risk doing irreparable damage to countless young people. It is vital that attention be now focused on ensuring that the quality of all provision is above a fairly high threshold, as soon as is humanly possible. The previous Ofsted standards for nursery education were not high enough. I know several registered nursery inspectors who said, "I have to pass this setting as satisfactory, but I wouldn't send my own child there." The new Ofsted early years directorate is apparently of the opinion that those standards are adequate for the new form of inspection shortly to be introduced.

I applaud the establishment of the early years directorate in Ofsted, although I do not applaud, I hasten to say, the push towards a much more formal curriculum at too young an age. It was high time that some system was set in place to ensure that minimum standards were set across the country. However, if the standards set centrally are too low, it will do positive harm. I understand that Ofsted is committed to reviewing standards in 2003, but the review should be going on now for the sake of the children already in the system.

The partnerships have precious little in the way of regulatory powers to ramp up the quality in their areas. If Ofsted says that a setting is satisfactory, by definition the LEA has to accept that, even if it knows that that judgment is flawed. There are stories of settings getting by during an inspection, sometimes by foul means. Often, the LEA knows what is going on, but is unable—

**Charlotte Atkins:** Has the hon. Gentleman visited his own early years unit? I would be interested to know his views on the standards maintained there.

**Paul Holmes:** My point was about the inspection of particular settings in various parts of the country. A setting in a certain part of the country may not meet the required standards, but settings in the same town or city may do so. The point was about the standards applied by Ofsted when it inspects those settings and about the lack of powers to force settings to come up to those standards, not about any particular group in any particular constituency.

If an LEA wants to ensure that all its settings—not most, or some, but all—exceed minimum standards, if it really cares and wants to do better, the regulations do not allow it to enforce standards in the last resort. Its only weapon is encouragement, and if a setting refuses to improve above the, in my opinion, unacceptably low minimum standard, nothing can be done. There is, of course, a lot of good practice. There are many successes, such as the locally devised and agreed charter marks. However, if a setting or a group of settings chooses to ignore such standards and there is a continuing shortage of alternative high-quality places, there is nothing to be done.

I am tempted to say that if we cannot get the quality right, we should not bother at all. That is indicative of how strongly the Liberal Democrats feel about the issue. However, that would be to deny the excellent work being done by many early years settings. The Government must act quickly to raise the minimum standards and to allow local partnerships and authorities to set their own aspirations.

One way of raising the quality of the education of our young children would be to put resources into in-service training for practitioners, particularly at the early learning goals and foundation stage. I appreciate that much good work is going on already, but more needs to be done. I not sure that all primary school head teachers have taken on the implications of the foundation stage for children in their reception classes. Many have, but many still need to understand fully what this means in terms of different teaching and learning strategies, staff training and the deployment of resources.

The Liberal Democrats have long called for the appointment of supernumerary early years specialist teachers in primary schools to take on the whole of the early years agenda, to train and support staff in the school and to work with the feeder early years settings in the area. I have heard of one authority that is actively considering that, but as usual it is finding the funding a problem. If we value the importance of the best possible education for our youngest children, we should be fully committed to supporting the improvement of quality in that way. It would make a significant difference to the situation in schools and would actively support the many, mainly voluntary, early years settings in achieving the higher standards to which I referred.

I know that there is a commitment by the Government to increase the number of teaching assistants in primary schools by 2002, but there is a danger that these words could be seen as weasel words. What is meant by "teaching assistants"? What qualifications should they have? Where should they be deployed? We are unequivocal: we say that all those teaching assistants in mixed reception and in year one classes should be qualified to at least NVQ level 3 in early years and that the guidance from the Department for Education and Skills should make it clear that the increase in teaching assistance should be targeted at the foundation stage. Achieving such an increase in suitably qualified people will present short-term problems, but they are not insurmountable.

I commend the Government on their sure start and early excellence centres initiatives. There is no doubt that they are contributing greatly to the provision of high quality services for the under-fives in areas where they exist. My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mrs. Calton) said that up to 50 per cent. of needy pupils in her area do not have access to that because they do not live in concentrated wards.

I am concerned that there are not enough early excellence centres. The Government should be unequivocal in their commitment to ensure that there is at least one early excellence centre in every LEA area. I say at least one, because large authorities will need more and unitary authorities will often need considerable support to establish and maintain an early excellence centre in their areas. Those centres are the best possible way of demonstrating best practice and the provision of combined care and education for very young children. They and future generations deserve nothing less.

A number of years ago, early years education in this country was a model for the rest of the world. There were many examples of nursery schools being exasperated by the number of overseas visitors coming to learn from the very best practice. Previous Tory Administrations allowed those standards to slip, and although we are pleased and gratified that the Labour Government have taken on so much of our long-standing policy on early years, much remains to be done. More needs to be done urgently to bring this country back to the pre-eminent position it once held in early years education.

5.6 pm

**Mrs. Eleanor Laing** (Epping Forest): I congratulate the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) and his Committee on producing an excellent report, much of which, surprisingly, I agree with. However, there are a few points of contention to which I shall refer.

I note that there is a lot of interest in this debate today, and it is good to see so many people in the Public and Press Galleries because the subject is important and all too often there is not much interest in what is said in Westminster Hall. We have heard many excellent speeches from Back Benchers.

I was concerned that I might have to declare an interest in the debate today, but I do not think that that is necessary officially. I am chastened by the thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Cotswold (Mr. Clifton-Brown) has today been prevented from speaking from the Opposition Front Bench on the subject of agriculture on the grounds that he is a farmer and knows what he is talking about. I do not pretend to know what I am talking about, but I am the mother of a small child and wonder whether, on the same grounds, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards might

chase me to say that I should not speak from this position on early years education. I shall plough on anyway.

**Judy Mallaber:** We congratulate the hon. Lady on the recent addition to her family. She definitely has an interest and it should be declared.

**Mrs. Laing:** I thank the hon. Lady for her kind wishes.

I thoroughly endorse what has been said today about child care. It is a very difficult job and anyone, anywhere, who is involved in child care deserves a medal. I can think of many jobs that are much easier.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield rightly began by considering when learning begins. An interesting part of the report deals with evidence taken from Miss Rosemary Roberts of the Peers early education partnership who posed the theory that a child learns in the womb. I am not sure whether I can corroborate that, but when my little baby was crying yesterday afternoon, I switched on the television for Prime Minister's questions, and as soon as he heard the usual "Hear, hear, hear," from the Chamber of the House of Commons, he immediately calmed down and started to watch. There might be something in that, or there might not. I merely offer it as empirical evidence, but clearly he likes it, and I have found a way of keeping him quiet for at least half an hour a week.

I have some points of contention, to which it will be interesting to hear the Minister's response. The Government want to provide education places for three-year-olds. I accept the importance of beginning education at the earliest possible stage, but I question whether the right way to spend the education budget is to give school or nursery places to three-year-olds. Does that not blur the distinction between education and child care?

I appreciate that paragraph 33 of the report clearly says that

"education and care are inseparable",

and I am sure that the Committee gave that matter adequate consideration. They might be inseparable, but in terms of who pays for what, a distinction must be made. I am not entirely comfortable with money from the education budget, which is scarce enough, being taken to provide for child care, which should perhaps be provided for from elsewhere. I will be interested to hear the Minister's comments. Every pound spent on a three-year-old is another pound not spent on a 12 or 16-year-old.

Concerning qualifications, I think that a sufficient standard for child care training is reached at, say, NVQ level 2. It is the least expensive option, and is achievable, so will make the greatest difference. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Huddersfield wishes to see graduates going into this field. However, if we make the qualification level too high we might make it impossible to achieve. I think that standardisation here is the enemy of development.

There are many difficulties in that area. Training is good, but if the requirement of certain qualifications is a barrier to involvement in early years education, we are producing an inconsistency. Many people in the Room have mentioned the importance of parental involvement. I certainly endorse that. Too many parents have said, "My child is now of school age and not my responsibility any more. Let the school teach them everything." That is certainly not the way for a child to receive the best education, but where do we draw the line? Parental involvement, although important, by its very definition means the involvement of the amateur, not the qualified person. If a parent wants to help in a nursery or other early years school, is he or she to be prevented from helping with other children because he or she has no qualifications?

I see that the hon. Member for Huddersfield is saying "no", and I appreciate that. It will be interesting to hear the Minister's opinion and the Government's policy on where one draws the line. I am afraid that if we require too many and too high qualifications, we will end up with even fewer teachers and carers in this field and make it even more difficult to achieve what we want. I would give further examples, but I appreciate that I must leave enough time for the Minister to answer.

It is interesting to note that the debate continues about how children learn to read, and what professional expertise is needed to teach a child to read. I know that I learned to read before I went to nursery school. De facto, I must have learned from my father, because I had never met a teacher. It might have been from my mother, but I think that she was too busy being a mother. Only fathers have time to do things like teaching. It must therefore be possible for a child to learn in such an informal environment. If we require qualifications from too many people, we will be taking away the informality through which many of us must have learned.

The number of nurseries and early learning schools or establishments that have recently closed concerns me. We all want more provision in that area because it is good for children and communities. Early years provision is a good start to anyone's educational career, but sadly it is not happening in practice.

I should like to ask the Minister about a letter that I wrote in June last year to the former Secretary of State for Education and Employment, who is now the Home Secretary. The proprietor of a nursery in my constituency brought to my attention the way in which business rates are applied. It appears that in January 2000 the former Secretary of State said:

"Nurseries have raised the issue of rates they pay on their premises and their wish for a level playing field between private and local authority providers. These rates should reflect the fact that childcare providers in the private sector who offer nursery education in similar premises to those in the public sector should not be disadvantaged".

I appreciate that the Minister will not be able to answer the point now, but it is important. His Department refused to answer it last summer, but passed it on to another Department, which has not even tried to answer. It is an important matter of educational policy and I hope that he will take it on board and answer it in a letter.

We want to see the best possible education for children in Britain for a variety of reasons, which include children's personal development, our country's economic development and the good of everyone in the community. However, I warn that repeating the word "education" again and again and again does not show commitment to it. Commitment to education is shown not by what the Government say, but by what they

*[Mrs. Laing]*

actually do. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Barker) said, the number of places available to children is falling, not rising. We all want more children to be able to go into early education and better quality provision, and we should like to know how the Government propose to achieve that.

5.17 pm

**The Minister for Schools (Mr. Stephen Timms ):** I add my tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who opened the debate, and to the members of the Select Committee who produced a thorough and informative report. A great deal of time, effort and energy was devoted over an extended period to that work, which involved taking a wide range of evidence from, as my hon. Friend described them, "peerless experts" who were all committed to making improvements. I also pay tribute to those who have contributed to the debate, which has been interesting to listen to. That reflects the high level of interest in the House in making progress in this area.

The report rightly highlights how crucial the early years period is in a child's development. I am glad that it supports the Government's approach and that it acknowledges the enormous investment that we have made in developing services for children and families, and ensuring that those services are accessible. In broad terms, we were spending £1 billion a year on this area in 1997, and that has increased year on year so that it will be £2 billion a year by 2003.

I should like to pick up on the point made by the hon. Members for Epping Forest (Mrs. Laing) and for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Barker). It is not the case that the number of places is falling. There has been a net increase of 221,207 child care places between the beginning of the financial year in 1997 and the beginning of the present financial year. We are on track for the current figure to rise to 1 million by 2004, as pledged. We are absolutely on track to deliver on the commitment that we have made, reflecting the substantial investment that we are making and a very large increase, year on year, in the number of places available.

**Mr. Barker:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Timms:** I really cannot, unfortunately, because of the time. I must respond to the points that have been made.

Early years development and child care partnerships are now operating in every local education authority area, doing excellent work in planning local services, closing the child care gap, providing nursery education places for three and four-year-olds and working to ensure a supply of suitable and appropriately trained staff. Many of those partnerships are excellent—my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Judy Mallaber) gave a good example. They often work with local regeneration partnerships, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East and Mexborough (Jeff Ennis) pointed out. Where there are problems, we are working with the partnerships to improve their performance. We have in the Department partnership advisers who are able quickly to identify the weaker partnerships and to provide them with the support that they need.

For the first time since September 1998, we have been in a position to offer every four-year-old a free early education place in a range of pre-school maintained school settings. We are investing a total of nearly £1 billion to extend that entitlement to all three-year-olds by September 2004 and to support related initiatives. Some 55 per cent. of three-year-olds are already accessing a free place and we are on target for 66 per cent. by next March. That is a very impressive expansion, as my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Charlotte Atkins) said, and there will be universal provision when we hit the September 2004 deadline.

We have introduced the foundation stage, which was widely welcomed in the debate, as a new distinct phase of education with early learning goals, which sets out clearly what we expect children to achieve from the age of three to the time they complete their reception year. The foundation stage emphasises the importance of education during children's formative years. We want children to enjoy high-quality experience during that time, supported by competent adults.

I listened carefully to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Valerie Davey) and other hon. Members about the dangers of too early a start to formal education. We are watching with interest the development of the evidence base on that, but at the moment it is still inconclusive: there are only a small number of studies. However, the research has demonstrated the great importance of the quality of what is provided, whatever setting it is delivered in. We are very much taking that message to heart.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Pollard) and the hon. Member for Upminster (Angela Watkinson) talked about special educational needs. Early years development and child care partnerships are working towards specific targets to improve the identification of special educational needs in early years settings and equipping the staff in those settings with the skills that they need to support children with special needs or disabilities. My hon. Friend the Minister for Lifelong Learning, who was mentioned several times during the debate, has put an enormous amount of work into that, for which I pay tribute to her. She outlined the targets to the Select Committee on 2 May.

The early excellence centre programme, which was welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Ms Munn), is promoting the benefits and raising the standards of integrated early years education and child care. There are 49 such centres offering high quality services, and we want to double that number by 2004. The first year evaluation of the programme shows clear evidence not only that there are cost savings to be made by bringing together and streamlining services, but that it is having significant benefits for children, families and practitioners. We recently issued another invitation to join the programme, and we are especially keen to receive expressions of interest from early years and child care partnerships that do not yet have an early excellence centre in their area.

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the commitment in the White Paper that we will legislate to free school governors to run a wide range of family and community

facilities and services, including child care, in schools. We hope to take forward that commitment in the forthcoming education legislation.

Sure start has featured prominently in this debate, and rightly so. It is another excellent, widely acclaimed example of integrated provision aimed at nought to four-year-olds. The emphasis is on early identification and early support to prevent problems, or to tackle them before, as a number of hon. Members have said, they become too difficult to solve. To achieve that, service providers will need to consider innovative ways of working more closely together, and with parents. We have doubled the size of the programme, and are well on our way to meeting our targets of establishing 500 local programmes and reaching a third of all children under four who live in poverty by 2004.

I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield that there is no weakening in that commitment. Contrary to the word on the street in his area, the target has not been watered down. Some 437 local programmes have already been announced, and of those, 197 are approved and at various stages of implementation. In the next nine months, 177 fifth way programmes will develop plans to begin delivering their services from next summer. I can therefore assure him that this is a determined programme of delivery of the various very ambitious targets that we have set.

It is early days, but initial qualitative research suggests that sure start is beginning to make a significant difference to the lives of the young children and families who use its services—a point to which a number of hon. Members have drawn attention in respect of their own constituencies. A study of a small group of parents in eight of the trailblazer programmes found that sure start had given both parents and children more confidence. Parents felt that one key benefit was the way in which children had learned to interact with other children.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands mentioned, in July we announced a package of £22 million over two years to support the development of 50 small sure start programmes in pockets of disadvantage in rural areas and smaller towns. We aim to reach a further 7,500 children through that programme.

The Select Committee's report was clear in its message that learning begins at birth, and that nought to five should be viewed as the first phase of education. I agree, but I also recognise the points that were made about undue early formality. In our Green Paper, we signalled our intention to develop a framework that supports the development of children from birth. That is what the work of Professor Lesley Abbott is contributing to. Her objective is a framework of effective practice, rather than a curriculum. Great work is being done through early excellence centres and sure start. We need to build on that and to draw on existing expertise and experience.

The Select Committee report and several contributions to the debate emphasised the vital role of parents, and I welcome that. Parents will always be their children's first and most important educators. They shape children's lives more than any other influence. Research on the impact that parenting can have on later attainment, social skills and productive adulthood is compelling. We know that learning and development activities experienced by the very young have a highly significant effect. Investing in young children and their parents may well yield the biggest payoff in long-term social and economic returns.

In the light of our plan to continue this big expansion of early education and child care places, we need to attract thousands of new workers by 2004. They must be the right kind of people, with the right skills to work with children. We have therefore launched a major four-year national recruitment campaign for the sector. Its aim is to raise the profile and to help recruit suitable new workers. I am happy to report that by the end of August the campaign's national helpline had received more than 67,000 calls. Some 10 per cent. of those callers were men, which is encouraging in the light of some of the points that have been made.

A number of issues were raised that I have not had a chance to comment on, but I have taken careful note of them all. We have come a long way. What we have achieved so far is excellent, but we know that there is a good deal more still to be done. I conclude by expressing again my thanks to the Committee, to those who supported it and contributed to its work, and to all who participated in the debate, for helping to take our thinking—

*It being half-past Five o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the sitting lapsed, without Question put.*

# Written Answers to Questions

*Monday 15 October 2001*

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Afghanistan

**Mr. Woodward:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what measures the Government plan to take to meet the humanitarian needs of Afghan refugees still in Afghanistan; [7687]

(2) what measures the Government propose to take in the coming months for refugees from Afghanistan who have already crossed its borders; [7685]

(3) what special action has been taken to meet the needs of Afghan refugee children who have been displaced by the recent movement of people in Afghanistan since 11 September; [7679]

(4) what money the Government intend to make available for Afghan refugees who are *(a)* outside and *(b)* within Afghanistan; and when the money will be made available; [7681]

(5) what estimate she has made of the humanitarian needs of displaced Afghans over the next six months; and *(a)* what proportion of those needs is already covered by pledges made by Britain and by the European Union and *(b)* what proportion of the funds have already been released to agencies delivering help to Afghan refugees. [7677]

**Clare Short:** The UN estimates that there are at least 5.3 million vulnerable people inside Afghanistan. This is expected to rise by a further 2.2 million in coming weeks, bringing the total of vulnerable people in need of assistance inside the country to 7.5 million. In addition, there were already some 4 million Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries due to over 20 years of conflict and four years of harsh drought conditions.

The UN and their non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners have launched an appeal for $584 million to cover the period October 2001 to March 2002. Donors, including the UK and the EU, have so far responded with commitments of $301 million. $29 million has also been pledged to humanitarian agencies outside of the UN Donor Alert. In addition, donors announced pledges of a further $407 million in support for humanitarian assistance for Afghans. However, it is not yet clear how these additional funds will be allocated. Information is not available on what proportion of funds have actually been released to humanitarian agencies.

My Department has set aside a sum of £40 million to respond to the current crisis affecting Afghans in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries. We have also set aside a further sum of £11 million for immediate short-term support to the poorer communities of Pakistan, especially those most directly affected by the influx of refugees from Afghanistan. Our top priorities are to help meet immediate life-saving needs (food, water, health care, shelter) within Afghanistan, as best as possible and for as long as possible, through the national staff of relevant agencies; support refugee needs in neighbouring countries; help host populations through programmes which benefit them, for example in health care, food, water and sanitation provision; and strengthen international humanitarian agency capacity and co-ordination.

These funds are being made available now through UN agencies, the Red Cross movement and NGOs. Their programmes include particular emphasis on children. For example, £3 million has been provided to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) for disease control, nutrition supplementation, safe water and sanitation, and psychosocial support to traumatised children.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what *(a)* bilateral and *(b)* multilateral aid has been provided in Afghanistan in each of the last three financial years and in the 2001–02 financial year to date; [7551]

(2) if she will list aid provided by *(a)* bilateral and *(b)* multilateral sources for refugees from Afghanistan in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement. [7549]

**Clare Short:** The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) track donor contributions to humanitarian appeals. According to OCHA, donor contributions for humanitarian assistance to Afghans since 1996 are as follows:

| | *$ million* |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 65 |
| 1997 | 44 |
| 1998 | 54 |
| 1999 | 111 |
| 2000 | 122 |
| 2001 | [1]222 |

[1] Up to 11 September 2001

It is not possible to differentiate from OCHA's data between assistance to Afghans inside Afghanistan and assistance to Afghan refugees; nor the split of assistance provided bilaterally and multilaterally.

Since 1997, my Department has provided over £32 million of humanitarian assistance to Afghans. This has included help to refugees in Pakistan and Iran who have themselves been so generous to millions of refugees over many years. Since 11 September, we have set aside an additional sum of £40 million to respond to the current crisis affecting Afghans in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries; as well as a further £11 million for immediate short-term support to the poorer communities of Pakistan, especially those most directly affected by the influx of refugees from Afghanistan.

**Mr. Woodward:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what measures (i) the British Government and (ii) the EU had already taken to help refugees from Afghanistan who crossed the borders, before 11 September, into *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Pakistan. [7682]

**Clare Short:** Between 1997 and 11 September this year my Department has provided over £32 million of humanitarian assistance to Afghans. This has included help to refugees in Pakistan and Iran who have themselves been so generous to millions of refugees over many years.

Our funding for assistance to Afghan refugees has been channelled through the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for protection and education activities, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) for emergency feeding programmes, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) for education and primary health care programmes, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) for improving the reproductive health status of refugees, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for education and livelihood building programmes.

Since 1991, the European Commission has committed some euro 430 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghan populations in need (approximately euro 81.7 million or £51 million of which is the UK share). This covers assistance to Afghans both inside Afghanistan and those in neighbouring countries.

**Mr. Woodward:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what measures the Government *(a)* have taken and *(b)* intend to take to co-ordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Afghan refugees. [7686]

**Clare Short:** Co-ordination for humanitarian assistance is the responsibility of the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) who have appointed a Regional Humanitarian Co-ordinator based in Islamabad. My Department has provided £1 million to OCHA to support these co-ordinated efforts. This contribution will also be used to increase the capacity of the Offices of the UN Resident Co-ordinators in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan. This includes the provision of technical personnel to set up a Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC) that will collate and communicate humanitarian information on the needs and programmes, to all concerned agencies.

We also welcome the appointment of Ambassador Brahimi as the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, who will supervise the UN's overall humanitarian and political work in Afghanistan. We have offered to provide practical support to his office.

**Mr. Woodward:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what policy her Department has to deal with members of the public who wish to make a contribution to humanitarian aid administered to Afghanistan refugees in Pakistan and Iran. [7680]

**Clare Short:** If members of the public wish to help Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, the best way is to donate cash to a humanitarian agency, such as the British Red Cross, or other NGOs, working in the region. Although some people may have collected goods that they would like to give to those in need, it is better to find some way of turning collected or donated goods into cash, and then to donate the proceeds to a humanitarian agency's public appeal. The logistics involved in despatching donated goods (cleaning, sorting, packaging and freighting) are time consuming and expensive, and cash donations are a faster and more economical way to provide assistance to those in need.

### Pakistan

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what levels of *(a)* bilateral and *(b)* multilateral aid have been provided to Pakistan in each of the last five financial years and in the 2001–02 financial year to date. [7434]

**Clare Short:** Levels of UK bilateral aid to Pakistan over the last five financial years are listed:

*£ million*

| *Year* | *Amount* |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 27.516 |
| 1997–98 | 27.818 |
| 1998–99 | 24.226 |
| 1999–2000 | 22.625 |
| 2001–01 | 15.038 |

Levels of total multilateral aid for the last five calendar years are as follows:

*US$ million*

| *Year* | *Amount* |
|---|---|
| 1995 | 528.45 |
| 1996 | 609.40 |
| 1997 | 527.66 |
| 1998 | 521.82 |
| 1999 | 296.78 |

Published plans for bilateral aid for the current financial year allocated £15 million to Pakistan, of which we have spent £3.9 million to date. We currently expect to disburse this allocation in full by 31 March 2002, though of course it is in the nature of planning figures that they are subject to change in the light of events.

Information on multilateral spending for the current financial year is not available.In addition, I have allocated an extra £11 million to assist Pakistan with the short-term humanitarian and broader economic impacts of the current crisis. This is planned for disbursement in the present calendar year.

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of her Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7237]

**Clare Short:** The Department has a normal retirement age of 60, regardless of grade or job title. The one exception is the three Security Guards who have a right to retire at age 65 in line with the terms of service of their previous employer, following their transfer to the Department under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. The retirement age for the Senior Civil Service is determined by the Cabinet Office and is currently 60.

### Angola

**Vernon Coaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of the *(a)* humanitarian situation and *(b)* situation of children in Angola. [7429]

**Clare Short:** The humanitarian consequences of the continuing war in Angola are appalling. Children and other vulnerable groups bear the brunt of the suffering.

There is some evidence that in those areas where there is good humanitarian access, malnutrition rates have eased recently, but this represents only temporary respite for a limited number. There remains a pressing need for a negotiated and inclusive end to the conflict. The UK has contributed £2.82 million this year to the humanitarian relief effort through UN agencies and NGO's as well as our contribution through the EC. We continue to monitor the situation through the UN, NGOs, the Red Cross societies, and by undertaking regular visits.

### Weapons Eradication

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much money the UK has allocated to UN agencies for weapons eradication; and if she will make a statement. [7339]

**Clare Short:** My Department, with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, are working to implement the Government's three-year £19.5 million strategy on small arms under our global conflict prevention pool. Under the auspices of the strategy the Government have been looking at ways of providing long-term support to UN agencies for comprehensive arms control and reduction measures, including weapons destruction. To date, we have committed £120,000 to the UN Regional Centre in Lima, Peru to assist in the practical implementation of regional and international agreements to combat illicit weapons trafficking. Also, under the strategy we are planning to commit £7.5 million to supporting the UN Development Programme in a global programme for weapons collection, management and destruction. The strategy will continue to look at areas where support for UN agencies will help to meet our objectives of reducing the number of lives affected by violent conflict through the uncontrolled availability of small arms and light weapons.

### Departmental Properties

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will list the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by her Department, broken down by leases by the Department itself, its next step agencies and its non-departmental public bodies, differentiating between purchases made as a result of the creation of new bodies and those purchases made by established bodies. [7817]

**Clare Short:** My Department has taken on three buildings in London over the last five years. These are our new headquarters building at 1 Palace Street, London SW1 (our current building being planned for demolition) and two smaller offices at 20 Victoria Street, London SW1, and Glen House, Stag Place, London SW1.

The buildings are all leased, with the annual rent being as follows:

1 Palace Street: £4,456,450

20 Victoria Street: £250,000

Glen House: £116,970.

No current valuation for the properties is available. We have no next steps agencies or NDPBs.

### Sub-Saharan Africa

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what her policy is towards *(a)* the operation of NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa, *(b)* the substitution of western for local cultural norms by NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa and *(c)* NGOs promoting western concepts of the role of women in sub-Saharan Africa. [7204]

**Clare Short:** My Department works with civil society (including NGOs) in the UK and in sub-Saharan Africa to build the capacity of poor people so that their voices may be heard whenever decisions are taken locally, nationally and internationally that affect their lives.

Like most Governments in sub-Saharan Africa, we support the internationally agreed human rights framework. This provides a common set of principles for tackling poverty and inequality. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and cultural entitlements.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Valetta Convention

**Mr. Gordon Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what estimate has been made of the amount of funding required for projects unable to be conducted by volunteer archaeologists under the Valetta convention; [4243]

(2) what consultations took place with local archaeological societies before the Government signed the Valetta convention; [4250]

(3) what provisions have been made for monitoring the impact of implementing the Valetta convention on the activities of local voluntary archaeological groups and societies; [4249]

(4) what groups will be consulted on the setting up of a register to implement article 3 of the Valetta convention; [4252]

(5) what consultations are planned, and with what groups, over the next 12 months on the implementation of the Valetta convention; [4248]

(6) what estimates have been made of the likely costs to public funds of implementing the Valetta convention; [4246]

(7) what timetable has been agreed for the implementation of article 3 of the Valetta convention. [4253]

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the Government's policy on and plans for the implementation of the Valetta Convention. [4462]

**Dr. Howells:** It is for each Government to apply the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (known as the Valetta Convention 1992) in ways that fit in with national practice and legislation. In broad terms, current measures in place in the UK already meet the convention's requirements. The Government do not believe that additional legislation, requiring a licensing system, is necessary to fulfil article 3.

Much archaeological work is already controlled through existing mechanisms. In England, English Heritage will be taking forward consultations with appropriate bodies representing all parts of the archaeological community on any necessary improvements to the operation of existing systems of control and on the development of a voluntary Code of Conduct for those who wish to undertake archaeological work outside those existing systems. They will begin work on this during the autumn.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what measures she plans to put in place to enable amateur archaeologists to continue with their work without contravening Article 3 of the Valetta Convention; [4313]

(2) what consultations are planned to develop appropriate procedures for the authorisation and supervision of future archaeological work in accordance with Article 3 of the Valetta Convention. [4312]

**Dr. Howells** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* It is for each Government to apply the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (known as the Valetta Convention 1992) in ways that fit in with national practice and legislation. In broad terms, current measures in place in the UK already meet the Convention's requirements. The Government do not believe that additional legislation, requiring a licensing system, is necessary to fulfil Article 3. Much archaeological work is already controlled through existing mechanisms. In England, English Heritage will be taking forward consultations with appropriate bodies representing all parts of the archaeological community on any necessary improvements to the operation of existing systems of control and on the development of a voluntary Code of Conduct for those who wish to undertake archaeological work outside those existing systems. They will begin work on this during the autumn.

**Mr. Gordon Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment has been made of the implications of the Valetta Convention on archaeology for the licensed activities of metal detector groups. [4251]

**Dr. Howells:** The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) (known as the Valetta Convention 1992) came into effect in the UK on 31 March 2001. The Explanatory Report on the Convention makes it clear that

> 'a State however, may only require mandatory reporting of finds of precious metal or on already listed sites'.

This falls within the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Treasure Act 1996. Further, article 3 might seem at first glance to require states to institute a system of licensing metal detectors but, as the Explanatory Report points out,

> 'prior authorisation of the use of metal detectors or "any other detection equipment" applies only to "archaeological investigation" and therefore not to the normal use of metal detectors'.

Therefore in the Government's view the current measures in place in England and Wales already meet the requirements of the Valetta Convention as regards portable antiquities. The impact on the activities of legitimate metal detector groups should be minimal.

**Mr. Gordon Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment has been made of whether the provisions of the Valetta Convention would be in contravention of the Human Rights Act 1998. [4247]

**Dr. Howells:** The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (known as the Valetta Convention 1992) is one of a family of Council of Europe Conventions dealing with the protection of the historic environment. The Human Rights Act 1998 gives further effect in the UK to the rights guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The Act itself does not have any force outside the UK, but clearly the ECHR does. Both the Valetta Convention and the ECHR are treaties of the Council of Europe with many of the same signatory states. We have no reason to believe that the two conventions are incompatible.

## European City of Culture

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when the advisory committee referred to in the guidelines for the European City of Culture will be appointed; who will appoint individuals; what selection procedures will be used to select and appoint committee members; what the deadline is by which interested cities must declare an interest in bidding; how many cities will be shortlisted; if there will be a programme of visits to bidding cities; and if there will be a limit on the nature and the extent of illustrative material which can be submitted to support a bid. [4371]

**Dr. Howells** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The advisory panel referred to in the guidelines will be in place by spring 2002.

The members of the advisory panel will be appointed by Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Ministers. They will be selected from the usual sources used by the Department for public appointments. These include: DCMS and Cabinet Office databases, consultation with other Government Departments and with the devolved Administrations, nominations from individuals or by other organisations. While appointments to the advisory panel are not expected to fall within the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice, the Department will apply the spirit of the code when making these appointments.

The deadline for applications by interested cities is 31 March 2002 and we anticipate that the shortlist will be announced by autumn 2002. No decision has been made regarding the number of cities which will be shortlisted. No decision has been made regarding visits to bidding cities. We have placed no limit on the nature and extent of illustrative material to support a bid, except that any audio-visual material should last no longer than 30 minutes.

## Absence

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many days on average were lost per employee in her Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from her Department in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5057]

**Dr. Howells:** The information requested showing the average number of days lost due to sickness per employee and the number of officials who retired early in my

Department are set out in the following table. These figures are for each complete year from 1993 following the creation of my Department in 1992.

| Year | Average days sick | Early retirements |
|---|---|---|
| 1993 | 4.8 | 2 |
| 1994 | 4.9 | 3 |
| 1995 | 4.5 | 2 |
| 1996 | 6.6 | 3 |
| 1997 | 7.7 | 0 |
| 1998 | 8.7 | 1 |
| 1999 | 7.9 | 0 |
| 2000 | 8.9 | 3 |

### TV Subtitling

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to extend subtitling requirements to digital, cable and satellite television. [5126]

**Tessa Jowell** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Extending the statutory targets for subtitling, signing and audio description on digital terrestrial television to digital cable and digital satellite services requires primary legislation. My intention is for the increased 80 per cent. subtitling target to be included in the forthcoming draft Communications Bill.

### Royal Parks

**Mr. Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what species and number of animals have been culled under licence in each of the Royal Parks during the last three years. [5899]

**Dr. Howells** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its Chief Executive, William Weston. Mr. Weston wrote to my hon. Friend on 14 August as follows.

*Letter from William Weston to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 14 August 2001:*

I have been asked by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the number of animals culled under licence in each of the Royal Parks during the last three years. I regret that it was not possible to answer your question before the Summer recess. However, the information you requested is as follows.

Only Regent's Park has culled under licence over the past three years: the details are set out below.

1999: 0

2000: 97 Canada Geese, 25 Greylag Geese

2001: 0.

### Departmental Funding

**Vernon Coaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to reform the system of allocating funds from her Department between regions. [6053]

**Mr. Caborn:** Most of this Department's funds are allocated through non-departmental public bodies. It is for those bodies to determine how their funds will be used, in accordance with their funding agreements with the Department.

The funding system for the arts will be reformed to create a single funding organisation with regional arts councils and considerably enhanced levels of local government involvement. The new system will enable the regions to be active drivers of the funding system, rather than merely clients of a national body. It will result in a more streamlined organisation which will offer up savings that can be ploughed back into the arts, as well as providing a structure that is simpler and more consistent for those applying for funds and support. The Arts Council of England is currently consulting on the detail of the proposed changes.

In relation to national lottery funding, we have asked the community fund to target £100 million and the new opportunities fund an additional £50 million to some 50 areas which are both deprived and have received less lottery funding than other parts of the country.

There are no current plans to change the system in relation to funds which are allocated directly by this Department.

### Sport Action Zones

**Mr. Denis Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what criteria will be used to select the next group of Sport Action Zones; and how many will be designated in the next *(a)* 12 and *(b)* 24 months. [6299]

**Mr. Caborn:** Sport England has decided that the remaining 18 Sport Action Zones will be designated following a bidding process which it proposes to launch in January next year. The bidding process will focus on the top 20 per cent. of deprived areas in the country and the criteria to be taken into account in assessing the applications will relate to the degree of socio-economic deprivation; the scope for working with other partners and initiatives in the area; and the level of sporting need and deprivation. It is anticipated that each region will have at least one zone and a maximum of five. Sport England expects to announce its decisions in October 2002.

### Digital Television

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport by what date all households in Essex will be able to receive digital television by *(a)* cable and *(b)* terrestrial distribution systems; and if she will make a statement. [6338]

**Dr. Howells:** The Government are committed to ensuring that everyone who currently receives the main public service channels broadcasting on analogue will continue to do so digitally after the switchover to digital television, whether by terrestrial, cable or satellite means. The BBC and ITC, who are responsible for the digital terrestrial television (DTT) network, are considering, in consultation with the digital broadcasters, manufacturers, consumer groups and Government, how to improve the core coverage of all digital television multiplexes across the UK. Maps showing the current predicted DTT coverage from each of the UK DTT transmitter sites have been placed in both Houses on CD-ROM and maps are also available on the Digital Television Group website: www.dtg.org.uk. These show that most of Essex is served by the Crystal Palace, Sudbury and Bluebell Hill transmitters. Cable services are available in Essex, although coverage concentrates on areas of dense

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population. It is for cable operators to decide on the roll out of their digital services and viability of extending services to non-urban areas.

### Refurbishment Projects

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list the top 10 companies to which her Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6426]

**Dr. Howells:** My Department leases existing buildings in central London and has not commissioned any construction projects. Two limited refurbishment contracts were let in the period January 2000 to March 2001. The contracts were the subject of competitive tenders and the two successful lead contractors were Interiors Plc and Levertons UK Ltd.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by her Department in (i) the current year and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6598]

**Dr. Howells:** My Department's business plans for this year and for two years ahead do not include any building or refurbishment projects.

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of her Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7227]

**Dr. Howells:** The normal retirement age for all staff in my Department is 60. In the Royal Parks Agency (the Department's only Executive Agency), the normal retirement age is also 60, but staff may be allowed to stay beyond 60 where

they have reserved rights to do so; or

they have specialist skills or expertise and are not immediately replaceable; or

it is in the short-term interest of the Agency.

The non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department have considerable discretion to determine the terms and conditions of their employees, and the Department does not hold details centrally. Their retirement arrangements, however, are analogous to those of the Department.

### Network Z Radio

**Roger Casale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment she has made of the likely impact of the proposed Network Z radio services on existing commercial provision. [6017]

**Dr. Howells:** In accordance with the guidelines published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, advice was sought from the Department's legal advisers, finance advisers and economists, and others within and outside the Department, including the Office of Fair Trading. This advice, along with the BBC's application and information contained in the consultation responses, was taken into account by the Secretary of State in making her assessment.

**Mr. Dhanda:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what information the BBC furnished her, in its application to establish Network Z, about the views of *(a)* the BBC's legal, finance and policy advisers, *(b)* the Executive Committee and *(c)* the Board of Governors; and on what dates they were given. [6992]

**Dr. Howells:** In its application to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport requesting approval to launch new digital services, dated 9 January 2001, the BBC confirmed that the proposals had received the approval of the BBC's legal, regulatory, and policy advisers and were approved by the Executive Committee on 5 December 2000 and by the Board of Governors on 14 December 2000. The BBC Chairman wrote to my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 4 April 2001 reiterating the views of the BBC governors. This letter, together with other correspondence between the Department and the BBC, was placed in the Libraries of both Houses in July.

### Premier Christian Radio

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the Government's plans to ensure that Premier Christian Radio is able to apply for a new licence. [6617]

**Dr. Howells:** The Radio Authority has recently readvertised the analogue licence which Premier Christian Radio hold until June 2003. It is for Premier Christian Radio to decide if it wishes to reapply.

### Foot and Mouth

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make it her policy to make funds available to organisations representing the rural tourist industry to publicise the lifting of restrictions caused by the foot and mouth crisis. [6074]

**Dr. Howells:** Although no specific funds were given to organisations representing the rural tourist industry, of the £3.8 million provided to the English Tourism Council (ETC) on 6 April for advertising and promotion, £2 million was given directly to the English Regional Tourist Boards (RTBs). This is in addition to the ETC's annual grant-in-aid allocation of £9.6 million, approximately half of which is allocated to the regions, including the RTBs. The RTBs also gained access to £50 million made available through the rural recovery fund.

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the value of financial assistance from Government to the tourist industry in England has been since the start of the foot and mouth crisis. [6070]

**Dr. Howells:** Since the start of the outbreak, the Government have provided additional funds of £3.8 million to the English Tourism Council and £14.2 million to the British Tourist Authority for marketing and promotion.

In total, the Government have allocated in excess of £300 million in aid to small rural businesses, mainly in the tourism sector. This includes £50 million for the business recovery fund, £22 million for hardship rate relief, £120 million in loans available under the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme and £4 million to help authorities re-open pathways. Many towns hit by foot and mouth are also included in a £100 million market town regeneration scheme. All these measures bring enormous benefits to the rural tourism industry.

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what estimate she has made of the loss in revenue to the tourist industry in England as a result of foot and mouth since the start of the outbreak. [6071]

**Dr. Howells:** Our best estimate to date is that the loss of revenue in 2001–2002 by the English tourism industry is likely to be about £3.3 billion in "value added" terms over the 8-month period under consideration (March to October). We will continue to revise the model on which this estimate is based in the light of the latest available data.

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much expenditure was incurred by her Department in *(a)* publicising the closure of rural tourism areas during the foot and mouth crisis and *(b)* publicising the subsequent lifting of restrictions. [6073]

**Dr. Howells:** No specific funding was provided by the DCMS for publicising the closure and subsequent lifting of restrictions in the countryside. However, the ETC and BTA have used additional funding to provide information on what attractions are open to prospective visitors through websites and information centres, as part of their overall marketing strategies.

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what measures her Department is taking to reverse the impression that tourist areas formally restricted because of foot and mouth, and now re-opened, are still closed. [6082]

**Dr. Howells:** At the regional, national and international level, new tourist websites and visitor hotlines have provided reassurance and a clear picture that Britain is open. Leaflet information has also proved successful. Much of the £18 million in additional funding provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to the British Tourist Authority (BTA) and English Tourist Council (ETC) has been used in strategic advertising and marketing campaigns to motivate potential customers and provide information on what is open. Furthermore, DCMS Ministers attended a number of high-profile domestic events to increase rural tourism's exposure and counter myth.

### School Terms

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if her Department was consulted by the then Department for Education and Employment on the implications for the tourism industry of proposed changes in the duration and number of school terms. [6067]

**Dr. Howells:** This Department has not been consulted by the Department for Education and Employment, or its successor, on the implications for the tourism industry of proposed changes in the duration and number of school terms. Last year the Local Government Association established the Independent Commission on the Organisation of the School Year, whose report "Rhythms of Schooling" was published in September 2000. The Commission's remit was to consider the wide-ranging effects of current arrangements and it made various recommendations, including about the duration and number of school terms. It has since received feedback from an extensive consultation and published its response earlier this month. Tourism bodies have been involved throughout the process and were included among the consultees, as was the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Decisions about the number, length and dates of school terms and holidays are taken by each local education authority and not by central Government, and we have no plans to change this. The Government will look carefully at the LGA's final recommendations (expected in December). However, we would need to be convinced that there was widely based support for a change before considering legislating to impose a new uniform format.

### Regional Theatres

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on her policy towards the maintenance of regional theatres in England. [6614]

**Dr. Howells:** This remains a matter for the Arts Council of England and the Regional Arts Boards. The Arts Council announced significant additional funding for the wider theatre sector in March and by 2002–04 the amount spent on theatre by the funding system in England will increase to £70 million. 65 per cent. of the additional funding will go to regional producing theatres.

### Jackpot Machines

**Mr. Swayne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) if she will make a statement about proposals by the Gaming Board to remove jackpot machines from members' social clubs; [7147]

(2) what assessment she has made of the consequences for social clubs of proposed regulations to remove jackpot gaming machines. [7145]

**Mr. Caborn:** The independent Gambling Review Body, whose report we published on 17 July, recommended that gaming machines in private clubs which were not casinos or bingo clubs should have a maximum prize of £25 instead of £250 as at present. All the Review Body's recommendations are now subject to public consultation, which will run until 31 October. Until the consultation process has been completed we are not in a position to make an informed assessment of the financial and other consequences for clubs; and we do not propose to take decisions on the report before then.

### Concessionary TV Licences

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the timetable is for granting concessionary television licences to sheltered and community accommodation. [7350]

**Dr. Howells:** Under the Accommodation for Residential Care concessionary television licence scheme, a £5 concessionary fee is already available for disabled people and retired people aged 60 or over living in residential or nursing homes or in sheltered housing which meets specific qualifying criteria. As announced on 9 April this year, we propose to introduce preserved rights to this concession for existing beneficiaries, in cases where changes to the social mix or the level of warden cover mean that the accommodation no longer meets the full qualifying criteria. Consultations between officials and the BBC about the necessary amendments to the television licence fee regulations are currently underway. We intend to bring forward these amendments as soon as we can but it is important that in doing so we do not create any new anomalies or unnecessary administrative burdens.

### London Weighting

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will estimate the total value of London weighting and London living allowances for her Department; and if she will make a statement. [6776]

**Dr. Howells:** My Department consolidated London weighting into basic pay in November 1996. It is therefore not possible to provide an estimate of the total value of this weighting.

### Correspondence

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what was, for each year since 1995, (1) the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by his Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if she will make a statement; [7038]

(2) the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords. [7037]

**Tessa Jowell:** The effective handling of correspondence and PQs is an issue to which I, and ministerial colleagues, attach great importance.

General information on the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall and on overall performance is published by the Cabinet Office. Figures for 2000 were published on 6 April 2001 *Official Report*, columns 324–28W and on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W.

Since 1 May 1997 my Department has answered 1,735 written questions tabled by hon. Members and noble Lords. In the House of Commons, 35 per cent. of named day questions were answered on the day specified and 53 per cent. of ordinary written questions were answered within one week of being tabled. In another place, 57 per cent. questions tabled by noble Lords were answered within two weeks of being tabled.

### Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will estimate the total annual running costs for buildings used, owned or rented by her Department for each nation and region of the UK, and estimate the average cost per square metre for properties used by her Department as a whole, and by region and nation of the UK. [6777]

**Dr. Howells:** My Department consists of less than 500 persons located in four Central London buildings. The total space occupied is 11,096 square metres. Occupation cost for the buildings in 2000–01 was £5,266,550 providing an average cost per square metre of £474.62. This cost will vary year on year dependent upon rates, utility costs and building maintenance.

### OFCOM

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what progress has been made in the establishment of OFCOM. [7563]

**Dr. Howells:** The Government have introduced the Office of Communications Bill to set up OFCOM, who will then prepare themselves to receive regulatory functions under the subsequent Communications Bill. My Department, the Department of Trade and Industry and the five existing regulators are planning the practical steps that will be necessary and a report on how this should be done was published last week.

### World Athletics Championships

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what spectator capacity a stadium requires in order to meet the IAAF's specifications for a standard capable of hosting the World Athletics Championship. [7929]

**Tessa Jowell:** The IAAF had previously advised UK Athletics that the stadium for the World Athletics Championships would need to be able to seat at least 43,000 spectators.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the accommodation requirements are for *(a)* athletes and *(b)* officials in a city in order to meet the IAAF's specifications for a standard capable of hosting the World Athletics Championship. [7944]

**Tessa Jowell:** These are set out Appendix I of the IAAF guidelines for the IAAF World Athletics Championships. I have sent the hon. Gentleman a copy and placed copies in the Libraries of both Houses.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what analysis her Department has made of Sheffield's transport facilities. [7927]

**Tessa Jowell:** My Department has discussed transport issues relating to the 2005 World Championships with Sport England, Sheffield City Council and the Sheffield City Trust. Sheffield City Council has advised that the infrastructure surrounding the Don Valley Stadium already enables up to 50,000 people to attend concerts at the Stadium. If the IAAF accepts our proposal for Sheffield to stage the 2005 World Athletics Championships, detailed

work will be needed to assess what, if any, further transport improvements need to be made to facilitate the staging of the event.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when it became Government policy to support the staging of the 2005 World Athletics Championships in Sheffield. [7925]

**Tessa Jowell:** The decision to support the staging of the 2005 World Athletics Championships in Sheffield was made on 4 October, after discussions with UK Athletics and Sport England.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions *(a)* ministers and *(b)* officials in her Department have had with the IAAF on the prospect of staging the 2005 World Athletics Championships. [7923]

**Tessa Jowell:** It has been my priority to keep the IAAF fully informed at every stage about the review of the UK's arrangements for the 2005 World Athletics Championships. My Department has had the following contact with the IAAF since 7 June:

2 July. I spoke to Istvan Gyulai, General Secretary of the IAAF by telephone to inform him that Sport England had commissioned Patrick Carter to review the Lee Valley project and to advise him that the Government were committed to staging the 2005 World Athletics Championships.

6 August. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Sport met Lamine Diack, President of the IAAF, and Istvan Gyulai at the World Athletics Championships in Edmonton.

25 September. At my request, a senior DCMS official spoke to Istvan Gyulai to inform him that the Government were considering Patrick Carter's report and that we would advise him of the position as soon as the Government, Sport England and UK Athletics had reached a conclusion on staging the World Athletics Championships.

4 October. Dave Moorcroft, Chief Executive of UK Athletics and I spoke to Lamine Diack and Istvan Gyulai by telephone to tell him of our decision that Lee Valley was not viable and to say that we wanted to suggest to the IAAF that the Championships be switched to Sheffield.

5 October. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Sport and I met Lamine Diack, President of the IAAF, Istvan Gyulai and Robert Stimpson, IAAF Treasurer. This meeting was also attended by David Hemrey and Dave Moorcroft from UK Athletics, Patrick Carter and by officials from DCMS and Sport England.

### National Stadium

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much *(a)* Lottery and *(b)* Treasury money has been spent on the project to build a national athletics stadium at Picketts Lock. [7924]

**Tessa Jowell:** Sport England has spent £1.57 million on the development of the National Athletics Centre project. All of this is from the lottery sports fund. No Exchequer money has been spent to develop the project.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) when the Carter report into Wembley Stadium and Picketts Lock was commissioned; [7922]

(2) when she will publish the Carter report into Wembley Stadium and Picketts Lock; [7932]

(3) when she received the Carter report into Wembley Stadium and Picketts Lock. [7934]

**Tessa Jowell:** I announced the review of National Stadium project on 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 37W. Sport England commissioned the review of the Lee Valley National Athletics Centre project on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 79W.

I received copies of both reports on 31 August 2001.

The Lee Valley Report was published by Sport England on 4 October. The Government have no current plans to publish Patrick Carter's report on the National Stadium as this would compromise the discussions that Patrick Carter is currently having with the Football Association.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what is her policy on support for (1) a single national stadium for *(a)* football, *(b)* rugby and *(c)* athletics; [7930]

(2) national stadia for *(a)* football, *(b)* rugby and *(c)* athletics. [7928]

**Tessa Jowell:** The Government continue to be guided by the governing bodies of sport as to the merits of a national stadium for their respective sports. We fully support the Football Association's aspiration to develop a national stadium and are committed to ensuring that UK Athletics has a robust legacy to enable the sport to invest and grow in the longer term. It is for UK Athletics to determine whether this legacy should include a National Athletics Centre and to discuss any future plans with Sport England to ensure such aspirations are viable and sustainable over the longer term.

### Tourism Incentive Group

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the progress of the Tourism Incentive Group. [7564]

**Dr. Howells:** In July, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked the English Tourism Council (ETC) to consult senior tourism industry leaders and propose a clear programme for modernising and restructuring the industry, which the Department for Culture, Media and Sport could then consider as a basis for entering into partnership and investing in reform. The ETC set up the Tourism Initiative Group and sent its report to the Secretary of State on 10 September—it made various recommendations under four key areas: product quality, service and productivity, data, and marketing. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is currently considering that report and held a seminar on 11 and 12 September to discuss with senior tourism industry and public body representatives how best to take forward the ideas in the Tourism Initiative Group report and, in particular, what role the industry itself should play.

### BBC Chairman

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will publish the membership of the Advisory Panel which is considering applications for the chairmanship of the BBC. [5127]

**Dr. Howells** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* No. It is not our policy to publish the names of advisory panel members. This is to avoid the risk of their being subjected to unwarranted pressure at any stage of the process. The selection process for all public appointments follows the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public

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Appointments, and requires an independent assessor on each advisory panel. This practice has been in place since the introduction of an independent element into the appointments process in 1996.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Global Temperatures and Rainfall

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what estimates he has made of the percentage increase in global temperatures and rainfall by 2100; and if he will make a statement on the recent discussions he has had on these issues with G7 leaders. [7310]

**The Prime Minister:** The recent international scientific assessment of climate change by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that global temperatures are expected to rise by between 1.4°C and 5.8°C over the period 1990 to 2100. Although global precipitation is expected to increase overall there is still considerable scientific uncertainty over future regional precipitation changes.

I discussed the subject of climate change and the Kyoto protocol with the other G7 leaders and President Putin at the G8 summit in Genoa in July. We agreed on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and committed ourselves to working together to meet this common objective.

### Government Policy (Presentation)

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will estimate how much time he spent on dealing with issues of presentation of Government policy in the media in the last 12 months. [7131]

**The Prime Minister:** Issues of presentation are a matter for the director of strategy and communication and the Prime Minister's official spokesman. I discuss these issues with them as required.

### Global Population

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what estimate he has made of global population by 2050; how many people there will be affected by *(a)* drought and *(b)* flooding; how many are so affected now; and if he will make a statement on his recent discussions on these issues with G7 leaders. [7309]

**The Prime Minister:** The UN, in its document "State of the world population 2001", estimates that the world population will increase to 9.3 billion by 2050. At present, around 1 billion people are affected by drought and desertification. There are no independent estimates for this figure in 2050. There are no reliable figures for the total population affected by flooding as the numbers vary quite considerably from year to year.

I discussed the subject of climate change and the Kyoto protocol with the other G7 leaders and President Putin at the G8 summit in Genoa in July.

### Terrorist Attacks

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what preparations he has made to defend key UK landmarks in the light of recent terrorist attacks in the USA; and if he will make a statement. [7307]

**The Prime Minister:** We have no intelligence of a specific threat to the UK. In the light of the events in the USA on 11 September, plans are being reviewed and guidance updated. Every reasonable measure of internal security is being taken. All the necessary authorities are involved.

### Life Peers

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister how many life peers have been created since 1 May 1997; and how many of those were nominated by him in his capacity as leader of the Labour Party. [7133]

**The Prime Minister:** Two hundred and sixty seven life peers have been created since 1 May 1997. This includes peers nominated by my predecessor but created after the 1997 general election. Of these, 116 have been appointed specifically either as Labour Ministers or as Labour working peers.

### Prime Minister's Powers

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will introduce legislation to give statutory definition to the powers of the Prime Minister; and if he will make a statement; [7127]

(2) if he will list those of his powers *(a)* granted to him by statute and *(b)* which can be exercised (i) without statutory authority and (ii) under royal prerogative. [7132]

**The Prime Minister:** In addition to general references to the Prime Minister, there are more than 50 specific powers conferred on the office by statute, most in relation to appointments. The Prime Minister also holds the titles and duties of the Minister for the Civil Service and the First Lord of the Treasury.

The Prime Minister's roles as the head of Her Majesty's Government, her principal adviser and as Chairman of the Cabinet are not, however, defined in legislation. These roles, including the exercise of powers under the royal prerogative, have evolved over many years, drawing on convention and usage, and it is not possible precisely to define them. The Government have no plans to introduce legislation in this area.

### Departmental Changes

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what his policy is on advising Parliament of changes in *(a)* Departmental structures and responsibilities and *(b)* ministerial changes. [7165]

**The Prime Minister:** My policy is to keep Parliament informed about changes to departmental structures and ministerial responsibilities. The list of ministerial responsibilities is updated regularly and copies placed in the Library of the House.

### Policy Advisers

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister for what reason his private secretaries have been redesignated as

policy advisers; and what assessment he has made of the implications for civil service neutrality arising from this change. [8012]

**The Prime Minister:** The No. 10 private office and policy unit have been merged to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of my office.

All civil servants work in full accordance with the civil service code.

### Lord Birt

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the qualities and achievements of Lord Birt which led him to appoint Lord Birt to the forward strategy unit. [8004]

**The Prime Minister:** I appointed Lord Birt as unpaid strategy adviser because of his extensive experience of strategy formulation in both the public and private sectors.

### Civil Service

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister when he will introduce a bill to define the role of the civil service. [7999]

**The Prime Minister:** The Government are committed to maintaining a non-political permanent civil service. They have given a commitment to legislation for the civil service, which will be taken forward as and when a suitable opportunity arises.

### Kyoto Protocol

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions he held with the US President concerning the Kyoto protocol; and if he will make a statement. [6771]

**The Prime Minister:** I have discussed the Kyoto protocol with President Bush on a number of occasions, including at the EU-US summit in Gothenburg in June and at the G8 summit in Genoa in July. I made it clear that the Government remain committed to the Kyoto protocol and to the EU's aim of ratification and entry into force by 2002. We agreed that climate change is a serious issue and that we would continue to work together to address it.

### National Missile Defence

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions he held with the US President concerning National Missile Defence; and if he will make a statement. [6772]

**The Prime Minister:** I have discussed national missile defence (NMD) with President Bush on a number of occasions, and expect to continue to do so. I have made the Government's position clear on NMD and I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 4 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 256.

### Afghanistan

**Lynne Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if the military intelligence that has been shared with key partners in the military alliance for action in Afghanistan has been shared with the UN Secretary-General. [8036]

**The Prime Minister:** We cannot comment in detail on intelligence matters, but all necessary information is being shared with coalition partners.

### Tourism (Departmental Responsibility)

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Prime Minister for what reason responsibility for the tourism industry is allocated to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport; and for what reason this responsibility is exercised at Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State level. [6072]

**The Prime Minister:** Tourism fits well with the wider responsibilities of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. These include areas such as the historic environment, museums and galleries, sport and the arts which attract tourists to come to the United Kingdom.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has overall responsibility for the tourism industry. Following normal Government practice, day-to-day responsibility has been delegated to the Minister for Tourism, Film and Broadcasting.

### Foot and Mouth

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Prime Minister prior to his decision on the nature and terms of reference of an inquiry into foot and mouth disease, if he will consult *(a)* parish, district and county councils in affected areas, *(b)* representatives of the tourist industry, *(c)* animal welfare organisations, *(d)* the NFU, CLA and other farming organisations and *(e)* hon. Members. [6434]

**The Prime Minister:** On 9 August I announced three independent inquiries into the 2001 outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

The inquiries, which will report to me and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, are:

an inquiry into the lessons to be learned from the foot and mouth disease outbreak of 2001 and the way the Government should handle any future major animal disease outbreak, to be chaired by Dr. Iain Anderson;

a scientific review by the Royal Society of questions relating to the transmission, prevention and control of the epidemic of infectious disease in livestock, committee to be chaired by Sir Brian Follett FRS; and

a policy commission on the future of farming and food to be chaired by Sir Don Curry.

The chairs of the three inquiries will set their own working methods, working in an open and inclusive manner involving a wide range of stakeholders.

### G8 Summit

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the G8 summit. [7095]

**The Prime Minister:** I met my G8 colleagues in Genoa from 20 to 22 July. The summit was an important opportunity to discuss a wide range of international issues. The conclusions of the summit were placed in the Libraries of the House at the time.

For the United Kingdom, the three key results of the summit were the commitment to a new trade round, the Genoa plan for Africa and the global health fund.

The Government believe that a new trade round would provide significant economic benefits. The European Commission has estimated that a truly liberalising new round could boost the world economy by $400 billion a year. Of this, between $100 million and $150 billion could go to developing countries.

In Genoa, we met the leaders of five African countries, as well as representatives of Latin America and Asia. Their priorities are similar to those of the G8—ending conflict, increasing trade and foreign investment, improving governance, health and education, implementing debt relief and closing the digital divide.

We welcomed the readiness among African leaders to take responsibility for resolving the problems in their continent. We agreed to appoint senior personal representatives to meet the leaders of the new African initiative, and to produce a plan of action between now and next year's summit in Canada.

On poverty reduction for developing countries, the G8 committed over $1.3 billion to a new global health fund to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and welcomed a further $500 million pledged by other partners. We shall work with the United Nations and other stakeholders to make sure the fund is up and running by the end of this year. The UK Government have already pledged $200 million to the health fund.

At the conclusion of the summit, my G8 colleagues and I accepted the invitation of the Canadian Prime Minister to meet next year on 26–28 June in Kananaskis, Alberta.

### Argentina

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his visit to Argentina. [7094]

**The Prime Minister:** I visited Argentina on 1 August and had talks with President de la Rua. Our discussions covered international trade and investment issues, the Argentine economy, climate change and UK/Argentine bilateral relations. President de la Rua and I reaffirmed our commitment to continue our dialogue on issues of common interest.

### Falkland Islands

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the representations and discussions he has had since 19 July relating to the status of the Falkland Islands. [7093]

**The Prime Minister:** I met President de la Rua on 1 August. We both reaffirmed our Governments' commitment to the joint statement of July 1999, and to continue our dialogue on issues of common interest. This does not affect our sovereignty of the Falkland Islands or our commitment to the Islanders' rights to determine their own future. There will be no change in the status of the Islands unless that is the wish of the Islanders themselves.

### Correspondence

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords; [7016]

(2) if he will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by his Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if he will make a statement. [7017]

**The Prime Minister:** The information requested is not available in the manner requested.

The effective handling of correspondence and PQs is an issue to which I, and ministerial colleagues, attach great importance. I take an active interest in the way my office deals with all letters sent to me. I receive approximately 500,000 items of post a year compared with an estimated 25,000 items received annually six years ago. My office takes action on all letters received within 15 working days.

General information on the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall and an overall performance is published by the Cabinet Office. Figures for 2000 were published on 6 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 324–28W and on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W.

My office aims to answer all ordinary written parliamentary questions within five working days, and named day written parliamentary questions on the day named.

I have answered 110 written parliamentary questions this Session, providing substantive answers for 88 per cent. of them on time.

### Ministerial Visits

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement; [6943]

(2) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement. [6944]

**The Prime Minister:** The rules on the use of non-commercial flights for Ministers visits overseas are the same as those that have applied under successive Administrations and are set out in full in "Travel by Ministers". A copy is in the Library of the House.

Lists of overseas visits undertaken by Cabinet Ministers costing more than £500 during the period 2 May 1997 to 31 March 2001, together with the cost of all Ministers visits overseas, were placed in the Library of the House

and published in the *Official Report* on 17 June 1999, columns 196–97W; on 28 July 2000, column 969W; and on 20 July 2001, column 467W.

### Cruse Bereavement Care

**Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Prime Minister what correspondence he has had with Cruse Bereavement Care in the past four weeks; and if he will make a statement. [7548]

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Member for South-West Surrey has written to my office about the work of Cruse Bereavement Care.

I will be writing to Mike Pearson, Chairman of Cruse Bereavement Care, this week to thank him for the outstanding way that Cruse has responded to the tragic events of 11 September in the US. During my recent visit to New York, I was very impressed by what I heard about the Cruse team's tireless efforts. Their staff both here and in New York have provided hope and comfort to many families.

### Chechnya (Human Rights)

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations he made to President Putin concerning human rights abuses in Chechnya during his recent visit to Russia. [7436]

**The Prime Minister:** I have discussed Chechnya with President Putin on various occasions and last did so in Moscow on 4 October.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Employment Zones

15. **Mr. Love:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of employment zones in reducing unemployment. [3590]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Employment zones are one of a range of initiatives we have introduced to help reduce unemployment. The 15 employment zones are performing well and have already helped nearly 13,000 people move into work. We are currently evaluating the zones before deciding how to take the initiative further.

### Benefit Fraud

16. **Patrick Mercer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the amount of money lost in benefit fraud in 2000–01. [3591]

**Mr. Darling:** In our 1999 paper "Safeguarding Social Security" we estimated that £2 billion was lost annually due to confirmable benefit fraud.

We have set firm targets to halve the amount of fraud and error in Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance by 2006. We have already met our first milestone, of a 10 per cent. reduction, 18 months ahead of schedule.

17. **Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to set targets for reducing benefit fraud in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. [3592]

**Malcolm Wicks:** This year we have introduced for the first time a continuous measure of the level of Housing Benefit fraud. We will consider the appropriateness and scope for setting targets for reducing the level of incorrectness in Housing Benefit in the light of the results of this exercise.

### Social Deprivation

18. **Mr. David:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to help people back into work in areas of acute social deprivation. [3593]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** Our welfare to work initiatives are helping people into work in all parts of the country. We have also introduced Action Teams for Jobs and employment zones which are helping people in the most deprived areas. Today we are increasing the number of Action Teams from 40 to 53, and teams will now run until March 2004.

### Carers

19. **Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when new carers over the age of 65 will be eligible to apply for carers' benefits. [3594]

**Maria Eagle:** We propose to make this change by Regulatory Reform Order. The necessary consultation ends today. We will lay the Order as soon as practicable and it will be considered by the Deregulation Committee thereafter. Following a period of 60 days, it will be laid before the House using the Superaffirmative Procedure. A similar procedure will be followed in the other place.

### Disability Benefit Forms

20. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to simplify benefit application forms, with particular reference to benefits for people with disabilities. [3595]

**Maria Eagle:** We are indeed improving the existing disability claim forms. Earlier this year we were able to reduce the Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance claim packs by up to 9 pages without losing any essential information. We are now looking at what further can be done to simplify both the claim forms themselves and the overall claiming process.

We are also introducing a shorter and simpler Minimum Income Guarantee form from the end of this month, and we are investing £2 billion over the next three years to modernise radically the service we provide to our customers so they only have to provide the same information once.

### Mothers

21. **Barbara Follett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans his Department has to ease the transition from welfare to work for mothers with young children. [3596]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** We have introduced a wide range of help for mothers with young children making the move from welfare to work.

Over 90 per cent. of the participants in the new deals for partners and lone parents are women, benefiting from advice and support in looking for work, training and

childcare. We have improved the extended payments of housing and council tax benefit scheme, and introduced extended mortgage payments and the lone parents benefit run-on. These measures are supported by the National Childcare Strategy and the introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit and the Children's Tax Credit.

The introduction of Jobcentre Plus will provide those mothers claiming benefits with young children with the opportunity to find out about the support available to help them make the move into work.

### State Benefits (Collection)

22. **Lawrie Quinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on his plans to make it easier for pensioners to collect their state benefits through private bank accounts. [3597]

**Mr. McCartney:** Most new pensioners (56 per cent.) already opt to have payment made directly into their bank/building society accounts, and find the process straightforward and convenient.

Paying benefits directly into bank accounts will become the normal method of payment from 2003. To support that, we will implement a number of improvements to our present systems to make it simpler for existing customers to switch. We will back up these enhancements with an effective publicity campaign, and where it is required we will also provide individual claimants with advice on opening and operating a bank account.

In addition we have made it clear that people will still be able to collect their pension weekly in cash from post offices. The Post Office is developing Universal Banking Services which will enable this to happen.

### Jobcentre Plus

23. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to improve co-ordination between the benefits system and the support given to help people find work. [3598]

26. **Mrs. Betty Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to increase the amount of personal advice available to unemployed people at jobcentres. [3601]

30. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to enable the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service to work more closely together. [3605]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** The new Jobcentre Plus service will draw together the Employment Service and the parts of the Benefits Agency which support people of working age. It will deliver a single integrated service with a clear focus on work to benefit claimants of working age and to employers.

Jobcentre Plus will come into being at the end of this financial year. At the same time, the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service will cease to exist.

To demonstrate the improved and more work-focused service we intend to offer in Jobcentre Plus, we are putting in place around 50 "pathfinder" offices throughout the country. In parallel, we are introducing work-focused interviews for all claimants of working age in 39 additional sites adjacent to the pathfinders.

### Pensioners' Benefits

24. **Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of GDP has been spent on pensioners' benefits on average since 1997. [3599]

**Mr. McCartney:** Over the period there has been sustained economic growth and our spending on pensioners, now some 5.5 per cent. of GDP, has ensured that all pensioners have shared fully in the rising wealth of the nation.

The proportions for each year since 1996–97 are provided in the table:

| | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 5.3 |
| 1997–98 | 5.2 |
| 1998–99 | 5.1 |
| 1999–2000 | 5.2 |
| 2000–01 | 5.3 |
| 2001–02 | 5.5 |

*Notes:*

1. The information in the table compares social security expenditure in Great Britain with the most recent estimate of Gross Domestic Product issued by National Statistics (24 September 2001).
2. Benefits included are: Retirement Pension (Basic and Additional), Income Support/Minimum Income Guarantee, Winter Fuel Payment, Concessionary TV licence, Non-contributory Retirement Pension, Christmas Bonus, and Housing/Council Tax Benefit and Social Fund paid to people aged 60 or over.

### Winter Fuel Payment

25. **Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many eligible men have not received backdated Winter Fuel Payments in respect of previous years. [3600]

**Mr. McCartney:** To date we have received and paid over 1 million retrospective Winter Fuel Payment claims for the first three years of the scheme: 1997–98; 1998–99 and 1999–2000. A possible 1.9 million people, the large majority of whom are men, could be eligible for a backdated payment in respect of these years. However, there are no time limits on claiming payments for these winters and we continue to receive and pay claims.

From April 2000 an information campaign ran to ensure that existing and potential customers knew about changes to the scheme and what, if anything, they needed to do to get a payment. It is up to the individual to choose whether to claim payments for past winters. There is no time limit on claiming payments for previous years of the scheme. This year, the Winter Fuel Payment information campaign began in June and will continue throughout the year.

**Mr. Webb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions for what reason he has brought forward the qualifying week for the 2001 Winter Fuel Payment. [7581]

**Mr. McCartney:** From the winter of 1999–2000, the qualifying week was fixed at the week beginning with the third Monday in September. The qualifying week for that winter was 20 to 26 September 1999. The qualifying week

for last winter, 2000–01, was 18 to 24 September, and for this winter it was 17 to 23 September. Next winter, 2002–03, the qualifying week will be 16 to 22 September.

### Jobseekers

27. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to enable the hardest-to-help jobless people find work. [3602]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** We have introduced a wide range of New Deals which help disadvantaged groups to move from welfare into work. These have helped well over half a million people move into work, and given thousands more the skills and confidence to compete more effectively in the labour market.

We are further improving the services available for the hardest to help, such as a £40 million package of help for unemployed drug mis-users, and a further package for a wider group including ex-offenders and the homeless.

We have also introduced Action Teams for Jobs and Employment Zones which are targeting the most deprived areas. Between them they have already helped over 26,000 people into jobs. We are increasing the number of Action Teams from 40 to 53 this month, and to 63 in January 2002. We have also extended Employment Zones until March 2003.

28. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to help people in deprived areas in West Yorkshire find work. [3603]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** Our welfare to work initiatives have helped people into work in all parts of the country. Our New Deals have been a success, playing an important part in reducing claimant unemployment in West Yorkshire by almost 40 per cent. since 1997.

We are building on that success, and with the introduction of Jobcentre Plus we will offer a flexible, individual service for every person of working age on benefit.

### Pensioners (Long-term Care)

29. **Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his policy is on the incomes of pensioners while they are in long-term hospital care. [3604]

**Mr. McCartney:** Most benefit recipients, including Retirement Pensioners, have no reduction in their benefits for the first six weeks of a spell in hospital. There is a limited reduction in benefits after six weeks in hospital and a further reduction after 52 weeks in hospital. These rules have been applied with only minor modifications since the introduction of the National Insurance scheme over 50 years ago.

### Child Poverty

31. **Ms Munn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress is being made with the Government's commitment to reduce child poverty by half. [3606]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Details of the progress we are making in tackling child poverty can be found in our third annual report on poverty and social exclusion, Opportunity for All—making progress (CM 5260), published on 19 September.

This year's report demonstrates that we have continued to make real improvements, improving the lives, prospects, and opportunities of children and young people. Over the past four years, we have taken action to raise the incomes of families, especially for those on the lowest incomes. To help children out of poverty, we have provided more support than ever before to enable parents to work, and ensure that they are better off in work.

We have introduced a range of tax and benefit reforms to give help at the time when families need it most, whether they are in work or not. The additional resources we are delivering for education and health are helping to reduce the chances of poverty and social exclusion in the longer term. We have also introduced substantial improvements in the system for children and teenagers who are vulnerable, such as children in care, and teenage parents.

Over the next few years we will continue to step up our efforts, including the implementation of major reforms to the child support system, and the introduction of an integrated child credit.

### Unemployment (Over-50s)

32. **Mr. Lyons:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to help unemployed people over 50 years of age back into work. [3607]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** The employment rate of older workers is up for the fourth year running, by 1.3 percentage points on last year's figures. In 2001–02 our range of New Deals, including New Deal 50 plus, New Deal 25 plus and New Deal for Disabled People, will help some 50,000 over-50s into employment.

### World Economies

33. **Sir Sydney Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his estimate is of the effect on employment in the UK of the state of the world and UK economies. [3608]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** UK GDP continues to grow steadily, bolstered by strong domestic demand, in spite of recent weakness in the world economy. Employment is at record levels and rising, while unemployment is at its lowest for around 25 years.

Although no country can insulate itself from world events, prudent monetary and fiscal policies, with inflation low and borrowing under control, mean that the economy is better placed than in the past to withstand global shocks.

While we do not make forecasts of employment and unemployment, an assessment will be made of economic and labour market developments, incorporating both UK and international economic developments, in the Treasury autumn pre-Budget report.

### Women (Return to Work)

34. **Dr. Gibson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what studies she has undertaken to identify obstacles facing women returning to work. [3609]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** A number of studies have helped inform us about the obstacles faced by women entering the labour market. These include longitudinal studies such

as the "Survey of Families with Children", conducted by the Policy Studies Institute and the National Centre for Social Research, and a study of lone parent families conducted by the Policy Studies Institute.

### Stakeholder Pensions

35. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions for what categories of people it will be advantageous to take out a stakeholder pension. [3610]

**Mr. McCartney:** The Government have introduced stakeholder pensions as part of our long-term reforms to ensure that everyone has the chance to save for a decent income in retirement. They provide a new pension option for moderate and higher earners who do not have access to a good occupational scheme, or a good group personal pension with an employer contributing.

The suitability of a stakeholder pension for any individual is a matter for them to decide in the light of their particular circumstances. Figures from the insurance industry show that in the first four months since their introduction almost 300,000 people had taken out stakeholder pensions.

**Miss Kirkbride:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if those who take out a stakeholder pension will be compelled to use their savings to purchase an annuity at the age of 75 years. [3580]

**Mr. McCartney:** Stakeholder pension funds will be subject to the same rules as other occupational and personal pensions. Where a pension scheme is not able to pay a pension, a fund must be used to buy an annuity by age 75 so as to guarantee a pension income throughout retirement.

**Mr. Lazarowicz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will take steps to increase the take-up of stakeholder pensions by people on lower incomes. [6655]

**Mr. McCartney:** Stakeholder pensions are primarily intended for those with moderate and higher earnings who do not have access to a good occupational pension, or a good personal pension with an employer contributing.

From April next year, low earners will benefit through the Second State Pension, which reforms SERPS. Under these reforms, low earners will get at least double what they would have got from SERPS, while carers and disabled people with a broken work record will be entitled to a second-tier pension for the first time.

A good second pension, building on the foundation of the basic State Pension, is the key to having a comfortable retirement.

### Minimum Income Guarantee

36. **Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his latest estimate is of the number of applications and approved applications for the Minimum Income Guarantee. [3611]

**Mr. McCartney:** Since the beginning of the MIG take up campaign in May 2000 and up to the end of August 2001, 240,186 additional claims for the Minimum Income Guarantee have been received and processed. As a result, 118,242 people are receiving an extra £20 a week on average. This demonstrates that our policies are successfully providing extra money to those among the elderly who need it most. As at May 2001 there were 1,716,600 people in Great Britain receiving MIG.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the total cost is to date of advertising the Minimum Income Guarantee for pensioners; how many applicants there have been; how many have been approved; and what estimate he has made of the total number of potential applicants. [6767]

**Mr. McCartney:** Up to September 2001, some 121,159 pensions have received an extra £20 per week on average as a result of the Minimum Income Guarantee take-up campaign. This demonstrates that our policies are successfully providing extra money to those among the elderly who need it most.

Since the start of the MIG take-up campaign and up to the end of September 2001, 240,186 claims have been received. The total cost of advertising the MIG to date is just over £4 million.

The latest available figures on the number of people entitled to the Minimum Income Guarantee who are not claiming pre-date the advertising campaign. These figures are included in the publication "Take-Up of Income Related Benefits: Statistics for 1999–2000", copies of which are available in the Library.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his estimate is of the annual cost of administration of *(a)* the Minimum Income Guarantee, *(b)* State Pensions, *(c)* Child Benefit and *(d)* the Working Families Tax Credit. [6960]

**Mr. McCartney:** The Department now estimates and accounts for its expenditure in resource terms and by strategic objective. The cost of administering each of the Department's strategic objectives is reproduced in the 2001–02 Departmental Report at Table 4.

The Working Families Tax Credit is administered by Inland Revenue. The cost to Inland Revenue of managing and paying tax credits for the six months to 31 March 2000 is shown in Note 3 to the trust account on page 83 of Inland Revenue's annual report for the year ending 31 March 2000, a copy of which is available in the Library.

### Unemployment (Southend)

37. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the impact of his Department's policies on unemployment levels in *(a)* Southend, East and *(b)* Southend, West. [3612]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** Between May 1997 and August 2001, the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance fell by 53 per cent. in Rochford and Southend, East, and 60 per cent. in Southend, West.

## Ethnic Monitoring

38. **Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the need for ethnic monitoring of benefit claims and appeals. [3613]

**Maria Eagle:** The Government are fully committed to ensuring that all people, including those from ethnic minorities, receive the service they are entitled to from the benefit system.

The Department for Work and Pensions does not currently collect information about the ethnic breakdown of customers. However, the BA does undertake a significant amount of work to ensure equality of access to benefits for all customers, including guidance for staff working with ethnic minority customers, provision of information in different languages and provision of interpreting services. Also, the DWP ethnic Minority Forum continues to meet at least annually, in order that we can hear and address the concerns of people who work with, and represent, ethnic minority customers.

We are currently considering research on ethnic minority perceptions about benefit delivery. This research could help to build on our services that are specifically targeted at these customers.

## Fixed-term Claims

39. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much he expects the incapacity benefit case load to fall as a result of his announcement about fixed-term claims. [3614]

**Malcolm Wicks:** The changes we are introducing to Incapacity Benefit are designed to help people with poor health and disability to achieve their own aspirations by helping those who want to work to do so. People making new or repeat claims to Incapacity Benefit in Jobcentre Plus pathfinder offices will therefore be required to attend a work focused interview to ensure they get the right level of support. These interviews will provide disabled people with the opportunity to discuss with their personal adviser the help, benefits and opportunities available to them. We will not force people with disabilities into work. People who are still eligible for Incapacity Benefit will get it and the existing exemptions from medical testing will not be removed.

## Unclaimed Benefits

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the value of unclaimed benefits was in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Scotland in each financial year from 1995. [7067]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Estimates of take-up in Great Britain are published in annual statistics on "Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-up", copies of which are in the Library of the House. Estimates are presented for Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) on a consistent basis for the years 1997–98, and 1998–99 and 1999–2000 and for Family Credit for the years 1997–98 and 1998–99. Estimates for the United Kingdom and for Scotland are not available.

## Fibromyalgia

**Richard Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many sufferers from fibromyalgia are receiving disability living allowance; how many of these are in receipt of this benefit for fibromyalgia only; and how many receive it for fibromyalgia in addition to other disabling conditions. [7077]

**Maria Eagle:** Information is not available in the form requested. The most relevant information available is that as of February this year about 170,000 people who were receiving Disability Living Allowance had a disease of the muscles, bones or joints as their main disabling condition. This information is based on a 5 per cent. data sample.

## Disability Benefits

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will set out for Q3 and Q4 2000–01 and Q1 2001–02 *(a)* how many people were awaiting an appeal for (i) Disability Living and (ii) Attendance Allowance at the end of each quarter, *(b)* the average time it took to process the appeal and *(c)* the average time it took to process the original claim. [7478]

**Maria Eagle:** Information is not available in the format requested. Such information as is available is as follows.

*Table 1*

*Live load of Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance appeals current on the last day of each quarter*

| *2000–01* | *Attendance Allowance* | *Disability Living Allowance* |
|---|---|---|
| Quarter 3 | 4,558 | 35,830 |
| Quarter 4 | 3,521 | 30,601 |

The average clearance times from receipt of the appeal by the Benefits Agency to the Appeals Service issuing the tribunal's decision and the average waiting times from receipt of the appeal by the Benefits Agency to the first hearing by a tribunal for the third and fourth quarters of 2000–01 are shown in table 2. The figures for the first quarter of 2001–02 are not available.

*Table 2*

*Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance average clearance and waiting times, in weeks, for cases heard in the following quarters*

| *2000–01* | *Quarter 3* | *Quarter 4* |
|---|---|---|
| *Clearance times*[1] | | |
| Attendance Allowance | 27.4 | 27.1 |
| Disability Living Allowance | 27.8 | 28.5 |
| *Waiting times*[2] | | |
| Attendance Allowance | 25.9 | 24.4 |
| Disability Living Allowance | 24.8 | 24.2 |

[1] Clearance times shown apply from the date of lodgement with the Benefits Agency to the Appeals Service issuing the tribunal's decision. Thus delays caused by adjournments are included. The time taken for the Benefits Agency to implement the decision is not included.

[2] Waiting times shown apply from the date of lodgement with the Benefits Agency to the date of the first tribunal hearing.

*(c)* The average times taken to process Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance claims for the third and fourth quarters of 2000–01 and the first quarter of 2001–02 are shown in table 3.

*Table 3*
*Average time taken to process Disability Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) claims, in days, for quarters:*

| | *Attendance Allowance* | *Disability Living Allowance* |
|---|---|---|
| *2000–01* | | |
| Quarter 3 | 26.4 | 44.8 |
| Quarter 4 | 26.7 | 43.7 |
| *2001–02* | | |
| Quarter 1 | 26.0 | 42.2 |

*Note:*
It is not possible to track individual claims through subsequent stages. The figures above therefore give the average actual clearance times for all new claims received in the relevant quarters.

### Motability

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many applications for vehicles were dealt with by Motability and of these how many were *(a)* for replacement vehicles, *(b)* successful new applications and *(c)* unsuccessful new applications; and how long, on average, Motability took to deal with each application in the above categories in each of the last three years. [7866]

**Maria Eagle:** The information is not available in the format requested. The available information as it relates to the last 2 years is in the table.

*Applications for vehicles dealt with by motability*

| *Year*[1] | *Total dealt with* | *For a replacement vehicle* | *From a new customer* | *Total declined*[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1999 | 157,816 | 83,024 | 74,792 | 10,795 |
| 2000 | 153,817 | 86,913 | 66,904 | 7,741 |

[1] Figures relate to year ending 31 December
[2] Includes both new and renewal cases where a customer has been declined or chosen not to proceed

Motability operates within a three day Customer Charter for processing all successfully completed applications and achieved this deadline in the years shown.

### Preserved Rights (Residential Homes)

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many residents in care homes are covered by preserved rights; and what estimates his Department has made of the number there will be on 1 April 2002. [7394]

**Mr. McCartney:** It is estimated there are currently 67,200 residents in independent residential/nursing care homes who have preserved rights. It has been forecast there will be approximately 60,400 people in this position on 1 April 2002.

### Pension Fund Surpluses

**Mr. Swayne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to reform the regulatory and legislative framework regarding the distribution of pension fund surpluses; and if he will make a statement. [7144]

**Mr. McCartney:** The recently published Myners Report recommends that the Law Commission should be asked to review whether the objective of maximum clarity over ownership of the surplus can be achieved through legal change. The Chancellor's and my officials are currently exploring the matter with the Law Commission.

## TREASURY

### Public Service Agreements

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) of 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 501W on public service agreements, what the *(a)* percentage and *(b)* absolute savings from PFI projects would have been if all projects examined up until June had been examined by the NAO; and if he will make a statement. [4614]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** Information of this nature, which would require judgments to be made about the potential savings and VFM improvements available from very different types of projects across government, is not held centrally. However, a great deal of central guidance and support are available to Departments contemplating the use of PFI—from the Treasury, the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and Partnerships UK (PUK). This draws upon reports by the National Audit Office and Parliamentary Select Committees.

As with other elements of their business, it remains the responsibility of individual Departments and agencies to ensure that value for money for the taxpayer is demonstrated before any PFI deal is signed. In carrying out investment and option appraisals, Departments are required to follow Treasury guidance contained in the Green Book "Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government". For PFI deals, Departments are also required to construct a Public Sector Comparator (PSC), which is a costed estimate based on the assumption that the required service would be acquired through conventional funding. Guidance on PCSs is contained in Policy Statement No.2: Public Sector Comparators and Value for Money, and Technical Note 5: How to construct a Public Sector Comparator. The latter notes that the PSC should not be regarded as a pass/fail test, but as a quantitative way of informing judgment. These documents and a list of signed PFI deals are available in the Library of the House and are accessible on the website of the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) www.ogc.gov.uk.

By June 2001 some 450 PFI deals had been signed by central, regional and local government authorities in the United Kingdom. To date the NAO has published 20 value for money reports on PPP/PFI deals. A list of these reports is available on the NAO website www.nao.gov.uk.

As evidence is gained of projects' progression through the OGC gateway process, which is designed to assist central civil departments in the successful delivery of projects (whether PFI or not), this will increasingly inform

central data collection, analysis and guidance. The OGC will also draw upon UK's work to increase central knowledge of PFI and other PPP projects.

### Independent Insurance Company

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to assist those companies who were policyholders of the Independent Insurance Company and who face liquidation as a result of the losses sustained by the collapse of the Independent Insurance Company; [4491]

(2) if he will establish a scheme to compensate those policyholders of independent insurance companies not protected by the Policyholders Protection Board, for losses sustained by them as a result of regulatory failure. [7062]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Serious Fraud Office is investigating the events at the Independent Insurance Company, following a referral by the Financial Services Authority 18 June. The Government will not pre-judge the outcome of this investigation.

The Government are sympathetic to all policyholders who face potential hardship as a result of the provisional liquidation of Independent Insurance. I understand that the provisional liquidators are continuing to go through the process of identifying all policyholders and agreeing claims where appropriate. Many of those claims will be covered by the Policyholders Protection Board. Claims by businesses, except for claims under compulsory insurance policies, will generally rank with other creditors of the company to be paid in due course by the provisional liquidator to the extent that funds are available.

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the potential conflict of interests faced by Herbert Smith Solicitors in their capacities as solicitors to the *(a)* Independent Insurance Company, *(b)* Policyholders Protection Board and *(c)* provisional liquidators of the Independent Insurance Company. [4490]

**Ruth Kelly:** Any potential conflict of interest faced by solicitors in this case would be a matter for the firm of solicitors involved and their clients. If a solicitor has acted where there is a conflict of interest, any complaint that might arise should be referred to the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors, a separate organisation set up by the Law Society for that purpose.

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the FSA were informed that Independent Insurance Company's reinsurance contract of £278 million with Ireco was partially reinsured by Independent's wholly-owned subsidiary Novi Re. [6554]

**Ruth Kelly:** The discussions between the FSA, the Independent Insurance Company and other individual companies that it regulates are kept confidential between the parties concerned.

### Child Trust Fund

**Mr. Boris Johnson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when details of the proposed Child Trust Fund and Saving Gateway will be published; and what consultation has been undertaken in respect of this. [6092]

**Ruth Kelly:** As announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the launch of the consultation on proposals for the Child Trust Fund and Saving Gateway in April, results of the consultation will be released at the time of the pre-Budget report this autumn, with further consultation to follow on more detailed proposals.

A wide range of financial services providers, academics, charitable organisations and trade bodies have taken part in the consultation exercise to date, both in submitting views and in discussion. Further consultation will provide additional opportunity for these organisations and others to inform the development of the proposals.

### Individual Savings Accounts

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what increase there has been in the number of ISA holders who are *(a)* standard rate taxpayers and *(b)* higher rate taxpayers, over personal equity plan holders, since the introduction of ISAs. [6368]

**Ruth Kelly:** The table compares the number of ISA accounts of all kinds subscribed to in each of the first two years with the number of PEP plans taken out in their final year, 1998–99:

| | *Thousand* |
|---|---|
| *1998–99* | |
| PEP General Plans taken out | 3,860 |
| PEP Single Company Plans taken out | 760 |
| *1999–2000* | |
| Mini ISAs Stocks and Shares | 1,278 |
| Cash | 4,591 |
| Life Insurance | 116 |
| Maxi ISAs | 3,293 |
| *2000–01* | |
| Mini ISAs Stocks and Shares | 1,623 |
| Cash | 6,017 |
| Life Insurance | 218 |
| Maxi ISAs | 3,401 |

The information on number of holders analysed by marginal rate is not yet available. However, from the account numbers detailed it can be deduced that at most 4.6 million people subscribed to PEPs in 1998–99 and at least 9.4 million people subscribed to an ISA of some kind in 2000–01.

### Voluntary Sports Clubs (Business Rates)

**Mr. Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his plans to assist voluntary sports clubs with their business rates. [6016]

**Dawn Primarolo:** Following the announcement in Budget 2001 of the Government's intention to consult on possible support through the tax system for community amateur sport's clubs, the Treasury is working closely with colleagues in other Government Departments and sports organisations, including Sport England, the Central Council for Physical Recreation and the National Playing Fields Association on the shape of possible relief. A consultation paper will be published later this year, which will invite comments on the proposed relief.

In drawing up the proposals, the Government will take into full consideration which specific measures will benefit these sports clubs.

## Stamp Duty

**Mr. Boris Johnson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional revenue he raised in 2000–01 from property and land transactions in *(a)* the UK and *(b)* the Henley constituency as a result of the increases in stamp duty in the March 2000 Budget. [6090]

**Ruth Kelly:** The estimate of the additional amount collected in stamp duty from property transactions in 2000–01 compared to the amount collected if transactions had been charged at the pre-2000 budget rates was given in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 2000".

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will publish details of those areas of deprivation which will benefit from reductions in stamp duty on property. [7610]

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria will be used to designate coverage of the stamp duty exemption across the nations and regions of the UK. [6442]

**Mr. Boateng:** The Government are working to identify how best to implement this exemption and an announcement will be made shortly. It is intended that the qualifying areas will be based on national indices of deprivation.

**Mr. Flight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the *(a)* amount of stamp duty revenue collected was in accordance with the provisions of SI 1997/1156, on the transfer of units in unit trusts and shares in open ended investment companies in the 12 months up to 5 February 2000; and *(b)* amount of stamp duty reserve tax collected, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 19 to the Finance Act 1999 and SI 1997/1156, as amended by SI 1999/3261, on the surrender of units in unit trusts and shares in open ended investment companies in the 12 months from 6 February 2000. [7397]

**Ruth Kelly:** The total net duty on the transfer of units in unit trusts and shares in open ended investment companies is estimated at £43 million in the 12 months up to the end of January 2000 and amounted to £40 million in the 12 months up to the end of January 2001. A further breakdown into payments and repayments and stamp duty and stamp duty reserve tax is given in the table.

*£ million*

| | *Payments* | *Repayments* |
|---|---|---|
| *February 1999 to January 2000* | | |
| Stamp Duty | 96.0 | [1]53.4 |
| Stamp Duty Reserve | — | — |
| *February 2000 to January 2001* | | |
| Stamp Duty | 13.7 | 11.3 |
| Stamp Duty Reserve | 38.1 | 0.2 |

[1] Estimated from available data for 10 months of the period

## Barnett Formula

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 425, to the right hon. Member for Gateshead, East and Washington, West, (Joyce Quin), over what period English and Scottish identifiable public spending will converge as a result of the Barnett formula; by how much spending covered by the Barnett formula has converged since 1997; at what annual rate; and if he will make a statement. [6958]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The Barnett formula provides the devolved Administrations with population-based shares of increases in comparable spending of UK Departments. Beyond the period covered by the 2000 spending review, changes in spending will depend on the outcome of future spending reviews. Information on public expenditure was published in Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses in April 2001. Any convergence would be affected by a number of factors, such as the rate of increase of comparable UK Departments' programmes, changes in population relativities, and changes in spending in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland not determined by the Barnett formula.

**Joyce Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what date he expects convergence in public spending levels between Scotland and England to be obtained through the operation of the Barnett formula. [6480]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The Barnett formula provides the devolved Administrations with a population-based share of increases in comparable spending of UK Departments. The changes in spending for years beyond the 2000 spending review will depend on future spending reviews. Any convergence would be affected by a number of factors, such as the rate of increase of comparable UK Departments' programmes, changes in population relativities, and changes in spending in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland not determined by the Barnett formula.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the additional resources that would be available to the Scottish block over each of the next three years if the Barnett formula had maintained relative spending in identifiable areas in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom in the same proportions as in 1997. [6959]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The Barnett formula provides the devolved Administrations with a population-based share of changes in planned spending in comparable UK Departments' spending. Identifiable total managed expenditure includes both devolved and non-devolved spending; the latter is not determined by the Barnett formula.

## Deep Vein Thrombosis

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in how many deaths in the last three years deep vein thrombosis has been a cause; and how many of these relate to air travel. [6436]

**Ruth Kelly:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

*Letter from Len Cook to Mr. David Kidney, dated 15 October 2001:*

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your question on the number of deaths in the previous three years for which Deep Vein Thrombosis was a cause and the number related to air travel. (6436)

Most people who die as a result of Deep Vein Thrombosis do so as a result of Pulmonary Embolism. Either or both causes may be written on the death certificate. The figures for both causes combined in each of the three most recently available years are given in the table below. Figures are not available on the numbers related to air travel.

*Deaths where the underlying cause is Deep Vein Thrombosis or Pulmonary Embolism*

*England and Wales 1997–1999*

| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of deaths | 6,996 | 6,922 | 6,877 |

*Note:*
Deaths are coded to the International Classification of Diseases Ninth Revision (ICD-9) 415.1 451.1 451.2 451.9 453.9

## Migration

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate, for the last 10 years for each nation of the UK, *(a)* inward and outward migration by (i) UK citizens and (ii) non-UK EU citizens, *(b)* the number and proportion of people moving (i) from and (ii) to (A) England, (B) Scotland, (C) Wales, (D) Northern Ireland, (E) Republic of Ireland, (F) the rest of the EU and (G) the rest of the world. [7001]

**Ruth Kelly:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

*Letter from Len Cook to Annabelle Ewing, dated 15 October 2001:*

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your question on migration to and from the constituent countries of the UK.

Tables 1&2 show inward and outward international migration by UK and non-UK EU citizens for the last 10 calendar years for which data are available. Citizenship data are not available for internal migrants, i.e. those moving within the constituent countries of the UK.

Table 3 shows the number of total migrants moving from and to England, Scotland, Wales, N. Ireland, rest of EU, and rest of the world. Data for the Irish Republic are not available separately and are included with the rest of the EU.

Net migration for an individual country can be derived from the table by subtracting total outflow from a country, from total inflow, for example, the net figure for England for 1999 is 170.3 thousand i.e. the inflow (528.4 thousand) minus the outflow (358.1 thousand).

*Table 1: International migration to/from the countries of the UK by UK citizens*

| | To | | | | From | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | England | Scotland | Wales | Northern Ireland | England | Scotland | Wales | Northern Ireland |
| 1990 | 98.2 | 4.7 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 121.3 | 14.9 | 2.8 | 1.9 |
| 1991 | 97.8 | 11.9 | 4.9 | 2.3 | 122.4 | 12.6 | 4.4 | 1.8 |
| 1992 | 90.8 | 5.5 | 1.9 | 0.5 | 115.7 | 14.8 | 5.3 | 2.5 |
| 1993 | 82.7 | 7.5 | 1.3 | 0.1 | 117.5 | 9.1 | 3.5 | 0.9 |
| 1994 | 99.6 | 16.5 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 101.5 | 9.5 | 2.8 | 0.5 |
| 1995 | 81.2 | 5.6 | 4.0 | 0.5 | 107.8 | 8.0 | 4.2 | 1.6 |
| 1996 | 90.5 | 7.2 | 3.5 | 2.4 | 125.2 | 12.9 | 4.1 | 0.6 |
| 1997 | 87.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.6 | 109.6 | 19.0 | 3.7 | 2.2 |
| 1998 | 100.8 | 7.6 | 1.9 | 0.9 | 93.5 | 15.1 | 3.2 | 2.7 |
| 1999 | 100.0 | 10.0 | 5.8 | 2.3 | 113.6 | 7.4 | 2.8 | 2.7 |

*Table 2: International migration to/from the countries of the UK by non-UK citizens*

| | To | | | | From | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | England | Scotland | Wales | Northern Ireland | England | Scotland | Wales | Northern Ireland |
| 1990 | 57.6 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.8 | 40.9 | 2.3 | 0.6 | 2.1 |
| 1991 | 46.7 | 1.7 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 43.1 | 5.4 | 1.0 | 2.9 |
| 1992 | 38.5 | 1.1 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 30.7 | 0.9 | 1.6 | 2.9 |
| 1993 | 36.6 | 3.6 | 1.4 | 0.8 | 35.3 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 2.3 |
| 1994 | 43.9 | 2.3 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 32.8 | 2.7 | 0.6 | 2.7 |
| 1995 | 54.0 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 0.8 | 31.2 | 2.0 | 0.8 | 2.6 |
| 1996 | 62.3 | 5.5 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 36.3 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 3.2 |
| 1997 | 66.1 | 2.0 | 2.9 | 0.5 | 46.2 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 3.4 |
| 1998 | 68.5 | 5.7 | 3.0 | 0.4 | 41.9 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 3.3 |
| 1999 | 62.7 | 1.8 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 55.3 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 1.9 |

Figures for all years show the EU as it has been constituted since 1 January 1995.

*Note:*

Figures in these tables represent total international migration combining data from the International Passenger Survey. Home Office data on asylum seekers, and people who entered the UK as short-term visitors but were subsequently granted an extension of stay for a year or longer for other reasons, and estimates of migration between the UK and the Irish Republic

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*Table 3: Total migration to and from the UK and its' constituent countries. Number of people moving from and to selected countries for calendar years 1990 to 1999*

*Thousand*

| | From: | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *England* | *Scotland* | *Wales* | *Northern Ireland* | *Rest of EU* | *Rest of the World* | *Total* |
| *To:* | | | | | | | |
| *1990* | | | | | | | |
| England | — | 35.1 | 42.1 | 9.8 | 87.0 | 228.9 | 402.8 |
| Scotland | 53.9 | — | 1.8 | 0.5 | 4.3 | 9.9 | 70.4 |
| Wales | 47.5 | 0.9 | — | 0.3 | 1.3 | 5.0 | 55.0 |
| Northern Ireland | 10.4 | 1.4 | 0.3 | — | 1.8 | 1.9 | 15.9 |
| Rest of EU | 69.1 | 3.7 | 0.7 | 2.1 | n/a | n/a | 75.6 |
| Rest of the World | 147.8 | 21.8 | 4.4 | 2.3 | n/a | n/a | 176.3 |
| Total | 328.7 | 62.9 | 49.3 | 14.9 | 94.4 | 245.7 | 795.9 |
| *1991* | | | | | | | |
| England | — | 43.7 | 45.4 | 6.7 | 85.2 | 215.0 | 396.0 |
| Scotland | 51.7 | — | 1.7 | 2.4 | 3.7 | 19.6 | 79.1 |
| Wales | 49.8 | 1.5 | — | 0.2 | 2.7 | 6.6 | 60.8 |
| Northern Ireland | 10.6 | 1.5 | 0.3 | — | 2.3 | 1.7 | 16.5 |
| Rest of EU | 81.2 | 5.1 | 2.7 | 2.9 | n/a | n/a | 91.9 |
| Rest of the World | 146.6 | 18.8 | 4.4 | 2.0 | n/a | n/a | 171.8 |
| Total | 340.0 | 70.6 | 54.6 | 14.2 | 93.9 | 242.9 | 816.1 |
| *1992* | | | | | | | |
| England | — | 44.4 | 46.3 | 8.6 | 84.5 | 177.3 | 361.1 |
| Scotland | 50.9 | — | 1.8 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 12.2 | 69.8 |
| Wales | 49.8 | 1.7 | — | 0.4 | 0.8 | 5.7 | 58.4 |
| Northern Ireland | 10.0 | 1.4 | 0.3 | — | 0.9 | 1.5 | 14.1 |
| Rest of EU | 66.5 | 3.5 | 5.3 | 4.0 | n/a | n/a | 79.3 |
| Rest of the World | 148.2 | 19.9 | 2.5 | 1.6 | n/a | n/a | 172.2 |
| Total | 325.4 | 70.9 | 56.2 | 16.6 | 89.1 | 196.7 | 754.8 |
| *1993* | | | | | | | |
| England | — | 43.8 | 46.2 | 8.6 | 63.2 | 184.1 | 345.9 |
| Scotland | 49.8 | — | 1.8 | 2.5 | 7.6 | 9.0 | 70.7 |
| Wales | 49.4 | 1.7 | — | 0.4 | 1.8 | 5.5 | 58.8 |
| Northern Ireland | 9.0 | 1.4 | 0.2 | — | 0.8 | 0.4 | 11.9 |
| Rest of EU | 75.7 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 2.9 | n/a | n/a | 84.0 |
| Rest of the World | 133.5 | 13.6 | 4.9 | 0.8 | n/a | n/a | 152.8 |
| Total | 317.4 | 63.1 | 56.0 | 15.2 | 73.4 | 199.0 | 724.2 |
| *1994* | | | | | | | |
| England | — | 45.9 | 48.4 | 9.1 | 84.6 | 204.3 | 392.3 |
| Scotland | 47.3 | — | 1.7 | 2.7 | 9.3 | 13.8 | 74.8 |
| Wales | 50.0 | 1.6 | — | 0.4 | 1.0 | 6.4 | 59.4 |
| Northern Ireland | 9.1 | 1.5 | 0.3 | — | 0.9 | 1.2 | 13.0 |
| Rest of EU | 62.6 | 5.7 | 0.6 | 2.2 | n/a | n/a | 71.1 |
| Rest of the World | 126.7 | 9.3 | 4.3 | 1.2 | n/a | n/a | 141.5 |
| Total | 295.6 | 64.0 | 55.3 | 15.6 | 95.8 | 225.7 | 752.1 |
| *1995* | | | | | | | |
| England | — | 47.9 | 51.0 | 9.2 | 82.5 | 214.4 | 405.0 |
| Scotland | 44.2 | — | 1.6 | 2.7 | 3.1 | 9.6 | 61.2 |
| Wales | 52.6 | 1.7 | — | 0.4 | 2.8 | 6.4 | 63.9 |
| Northern Ireland | 11.2 | 2.4 | 0.5 | — | 0.8 | 1.2 | 16.1 |
| Rest of EU | 62.7 | 3.4 | 2.5 | 3.0 | n/a | n/a | 71.6 |
| Rest of the World | 125.3 | 10.5 | 3.1 | 1.5 | n/a | n/a | 140.4 |
| Total | 295.9 | 65.9 | 58.7 | 16.8 | 89.2 | 231.6 | 758.2 |

## Manufacturing Jobs

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many manufacturing jobs have been lost since May 1997. [7758]

**Ruth Kelly:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

*Letter from Len Cook to Mr. John Bercow, dated 15 October 2001:*

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your recent question about the number of manufacturing jobs lost since May 1997 (7758).

The table below shows the number of employee jobs in manufacturing for May 1997 and July 2001.

| UK | Thousands[1] |
|---|---|
| May 1997 | 4,160 |
| July 2001 | 3,817 |
| Change between May 1997 and July 2001 | –343 (–8.2%) |

[1] Seasonally adjusted

These estimates are based on the results of regular sample surveys of employers which count the number of employee jobs. The data are published in Statbase on the National Statistics website www.statistics.gov.uk./statbase/tsdataset.asp?vlnk=342 under series identifier YEJL.

## Excess Winter Deaths

**Mr. Webb:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of excess winter deaths which occurred in 2000–01 in *(a)* each English region, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Great Britain, by age band; and if he will provide corresponding estimates for each of the last five years. [7574]

**Ruth Kelly:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

*Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Steve Webb, dated 15 October 2001:*

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking for estimates of the number of excess winter deaths in 2000–01 for each English region, Wales, Scotland and Great Britain broken down by age band and for corresponding estimates for each of the last five years (7574).

Final figures for English Government Office Regions and for Wales for 1995–96 to 1998–99 and provisional figures for 1999–2000 were provided on 8 November 2000, *Official Report*, columns 269–272W. Figures for Scotland are now the responsibility of the Scottish Executive.

The Office for National Statistics will be releasing provisional excess winter mortality figures for 2000–2001 and final figures for 1999–2000 on 18 October 2001. I will be placing a copy in the Libraries of the House at that time.

## Domestic Service

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of people employed *(a)* legally and *(b)* illegally in domestic service in each of the last five years. [7214]

**Ruth Kelly:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

*Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Graham Brady, dated October 2001:*

As National Statistician, I have been asked to reply to your parliamentary question concerning legal and illegal employment in domestic services. (7214)

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides estimates of the total number of people who report themselves in the survey as being employed in domestic service. Figures for each of the last five years are shown in the table.

The LFS does not collect information on whether people are employed legally or illegally.

*All persons employed in domestic service[1] United Kingdom March-May 1997 to March-May 2001 not seasonally adjusted*

| Year | Thousand |
|---|---|
| 1997 | 159 |
| 1998 | 145 |
| 1999 | 138 |
| 2000 | 134 |
| 2001 | 115 |

[1] People employed in Standard Industrial Classification (1992) division P: Private households with employed person

*Source:*
ONS Labour Force Survey

## Money Laundering

**Peter Bradley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the role of lightly regulated financial regimes overseas in allowing money laundering in support of international drug trafficking, arms running and terrorism. [7440]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Financial Action Task Force, of which the UK is a member, carries out regular assessments on the financial regimes of countries and territories which it suspects may be used for laundering money related to drug trafficking, arms running and terrorism. Those countries and territories which are listed as non-co-operative are required to put in place adequate systems to prevent money laundering before they can be considered for removal from the list. So far four countries and territories have made sufficient improvements that they can be de-listed.

**Peter Bradley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that the international community acts in concert to eliminate money laundering. [7441]

**Ruth Kelly:** The international standards against money laundering are set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The UK has promoted these standards and sought the maximum international exchange of information and judicial co-operation. We have also pressed the International Monetary Fund to recognise the FATF 40 recommendations as the international standard, which it has now done; and we have promoted a new European Union directive to strengthen community obligations to combat money laundering.

**Peter Bradley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which countries he has identified as encouraging facilitating money laundering; and what progress has been made in persuading them to impose proper regulation on their financial regimes. [7442]

**Ruth Kelly:** On 7 September 2001, the Financial Action Task Force, of which the UK is a member, identified 19 non-co-operative countries or territories—Cook Islands, Dominica, Egypt, Grenada, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Lebanon, Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Nauru, Nigeria, Niue, Philippines, Russia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Ukraine. The FATF is engaged in constructive dialogue with all these countries and territories to improve their compliance with international anti-money laundering standards. Those countries and territories judged to be

non-compliant with international anti-money laundering standards are identified as such and put on the list of non-co-operative countries and territories.

### Means-tested Benefits and Tax Credits

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact on the savings ratio of means-tested benefits and tax credits introduced since May 1997. [7757]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Government's strategy to encourage saving, published in November 2000 in "Helping People to Save", is to create the right environment for saving, including the right macro-economic environment, create the right incentives for people to save, and provide information and education to help people make the right saving choices. Government policies on means-tested benefits and tax credits target assistance to those most in need.

### Trade in Goods Deficit

**Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the deficit on trade in goods for the UK was in 2000; and what his forecast is for 2001. [7647]

**Ruth Kelly:** Latest balance of payments and trade data were released by the ONS on 25 and 20 September. The Government will publish updated forecasts for the UK economy in this autumn's pre-Budget report.

### Scottish Bus Group Pension Fund

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he received from the Scottish Executive prior to the decision being taken to transfer moneys from the Scottish Bus Group pension fund to the Exchequer; and if he will make a statement; [7074]

(2) regarding the decision to transfer moneys from the Scottish Bus Group pension fund to the Exchequer. [7073]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** Following discussion between the Scottish Executive and the Treasury, the Scottish Executive announced in December 2000 that agreement had been reached with the Treasury that when the Scottish Transport Group pension schemes are wound up the Scottish Executive will make ex gratia payments to members. A total of around £100 million is expected to be available for distribution.

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ensure Scottish Bus Group pension fund holders affected by the decision to transfer moneys from the Scottish Bus Group pension fund surplus to the Exchequer are compensated to the value of their policy on maturity; and if he will make a statement. [7076]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The Scottish Executive announced in December 2000 that they will make ex gratia payments to scheme members. A total of around £100 million is expected to be available for distribution. The payments are in addition to members' accrued pension rights.

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reason the National Bus Group Pension Fund has been treated differently from the Scottish Bus Group pension fund; what his policy is on payment of additional compensation to Scottish Bus Group pensioners; and if he will make a statement. [7075]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The circumstances of the National Bus Group pension fund are not the same as those of the Scottish Transport Group pension fund. However, while there is no legal entitlement for STG pension scheme members to share in the pension surplus at wind-up, the Scottish Executive have announced that they will make ex gratia payments to members, to achieve an outcome broadly comparable to that secured in England.

### London Weighting

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total annual value of London weightings and London living allowances for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [6872]

**Ruth Kelly:** As at 31 August 2001, the total value of London weightings and London allowance being paid to HM Treasury staff was £134,796 per annum.

### R and D Tax Credits

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his policy is on levels of R and D tax credits in Objective 1 areas; and if he will make a statement. [6441]

**Dawn Primarolo:** Research and development tax credits for companies which qualify as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were introduced from April 2000. In Budget 2001 we announced a consultation on similar tax credits for larger companies. The consultation has now closed and we are analysing the responses.

Regional tax measures present particular problems through the distortions they can introduce into the tax system and the difficulties of developing workable, yet straightforward provisions.

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to *(a)* extend the research and development tax credit programme and *(b)* remove employers' national insurance contributions on stock options. [6607]

**Dawn Primarolo:** Research and development tax credits for companies which qualify as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were introduced from April 2000. In Budget 2001 we announced consultation on similar tax credits for larger companies. The consultation has now closed and we are analysing the responses.

We have no plans to remove employers' national insurance contributions from employee share options. The application of national insurance contributions to the exercise of share options is part of the Government's general policy of aligning income tax and national insurance. However, in response to concerns from business about the uncertainty of their national insurance liability, we introduced an easement in July 2000. This allows companies to pass their liability on share options to their employees with their agreement. So far 900 companies have taken advantage of this measure.

### Money Transmission System

**Mr. Lazarowicz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to set up a regulator for the money transmission system. [6647]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The Government published in August 2001 a response to consultation on its proposals of December 2000 to give the Office of Fair Trading new powers to promote competition in payment systems (these two documents have been deposited in the House of Commons Library and can be found electronically at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pub/html/reg/pay.html and http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press/2001/p95 01.html respectively). The Government intend to legislate as soon as parliamentary time permits.

### Euro

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what feasibility study he has undertaken of making the euro legal tender in the UK in tandem with the pound sterling. [7311]

**Ruth Kelly:** None. The Government's policy on membership of the single currency remains as set out by the Chancellor in October 1997, and restated by the Prime Minister to the House of Commons in February 1999. The determining factor underpinning any Government decision to join the single currency is the national economic interest, and whether the economic case is clear and unambiguous.

### PSBR

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes to the definition of PSBR have taken place since May 1997. [7356]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** In July 1998 the PSBR was renamed the public sector net cash requirement. In September 1998 the definition was modified to conform with the new European System of Accounts (ESA95). Details of the changes were given in Chapter 5 of "Monthly Statistics on Public Sector Finances: a methodological guide" (no. 12 in Government Statistical Service Methodology Series). Further information on the Government's use of fiscal aggregates in setting fiscal policy can be found in Section 4 of "Analysing UK Fiscal Policy" (HM Treasury, November 1999).

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of his Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7225]

**Ruth Kelly:** Information on the normal retirement ages for the Chancellor's departments and executive agencies is as follows:

| *Department/agency* | *Compulsory retirement age* | *Comments* |
|---|---|---|
| HM Treasury | 60 for all staff | |
| Debt Management Office (HMT agency) | 60 for all staff | |
| Office of Government Commerce | 60 for new starters joining OGC post 1 April 2001 | Some staff have reserved rights to be retained up to age 65 and there are short-service concessions for some staff who have less than 20 years' service |
| HM Customs and Excise | 60 for all staff | Discretion in some cases for retention of those with shortage skills beyond age 60, subject to meeting health and efficiency requirements |
| Inland Revenue | 60 for all staff | Discretion in some cases for retention beyond age 60, subject to meeting health and efficiency requirements, plus a short-service concession for those with less than 25 years pensionable service |
| Government Actuary's Department | 60 for all staff | |
| Office for National Statistics | 60 for all staff | Some staff have reserved rights to retire between the ages of 60 and 64 and field force interviewers employed on a fee-paid basis, have a compulsory retirement age of 65 |

### Integrated Tax and Benefits System

**Mr. Colman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the introduction of an integrated tax and benefits system for the United Kingdom. [6481]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The Government are committed to further integration of the tax and benefit system to help achieve the following aims: tackling poverty; promoting incentives to work and save; maximising take up; targeting support on those who need it most; and improving customer service and increasing efficiency.

During the last Parliament, a number of reforms were put in place, including the introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit, the Children's Tax Credit and the Minimum Income Guarantee for pensioners. In the next stage of reform, the Government intend to introduce a new system of payable tax credits from 2003 which will help to support families, make work pay and tackle child poverty. In addition, the Pension Credit, which will be introduced from 2003, will help reward saving, support pensioners on low to modest incomes and tackle pensioner poverty.

### Foot and Mouth

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how projections for future growth of the UK economy have been revised as a result of the foot and mouth disease. [6075]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The Government will publish updated forecasts for the UK economy in the autumn pre-Budget report.

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* companies and *(b)* non-incorporated businesses have applied to defer payments

of (i) corporation and personal tax and (ii) value added tax as a result of foot and mouth disease; and how many were in (A) the UK and (B) Scotland. [6077]

**Dawn Primarolo:** As at 7 October, 5,901 businesses had applied to defer payments of company tax, 3,080 businesses had applied to defer value added tax and 9,760 individuals had applied to defer self-assessed tax.

Out of a total of 18,741 businesses, 15,688 of these were in England with the remaining 3,053 in Scotland.

### Tax Returns

**Mr. Lazarowicz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure a reduction in the number of errors made by the Inland Revenue when amending self-assessment tax returns. [6653]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The Inland Revenue has a quality monitoring system under which it carries out an annual review of the processing work, which includes amendments to self-assessment tax returns. Action is taken to determine the cause of errors and to identify corrective measures.

In addition, since March 2000, the Revenue has operated a programme of quality assurance and quality control for the processing of tax returns and other key operating processes. This is part of a national quality programme for quality improvement.

Staff involved in SA processing work are subject to individual checks of work done to determine the cause of any errors and to ensure prompt remedial action is taken.

The results of the quality monitoring exercise for 1999–2000 returns showed a significant improvement on the results for the previous year. A further improvement is being sought for 2000–01 returns.

### Climate Change Levy

**David Maclean:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 July 2001, *Official Report* column 412, to the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Mr. Flight), on what date officials of HM Customs and Excise first met to consider the charging of VAT on climate change levy liabilities; and how many times they have subsequently met. [6876]

**Mr. Boateng:** Customs officials did not meet on this specific issue. The law requires that the value on which value added tax is calculated is the total amount of money to be given in exchange for a supply. This amount includes tax, and since the inception of VAT it has been calculated on the excise duty inclusive value of sales of goods such as petrol, alcohol and tobacco. The levy follows this long-established principle.

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his latest estimate of the yield from climate change levy is in *(a)* 2001–02, *(b)* 2002–03 and *(c)* 2003–04. [7660]

**Mr. Boateng:** The latest published forecast of the yield for climate change levy in 2001–02 is set out in the Financial Statement and Budget report published on 7 March 2001. A routine forecast will be published in this autumn's pre-Budget report.

### Departmental Properties

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the guidelines are for Government bodies, including and distinguishing between Departments, Next Steps agencies and non-departmental public bodies, with regards to purchasing leases for properties. [7806]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** Guidelines for the acquisition of properties can be found in the Estates Services Guide (ESG), which is published by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC). The ESG offers Government users on the Civil Estate good practice guidance on estate management, including the acquisition of office accommodation by leasing and other means. It does not provide advice on residential or agricultural property. The ESG is made freely available to Government Departments, Next Steps agencies and non-departmental public bodies.

### Equitable Life

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will establish a scheme to compensate policyholders of Equitable Life for losses sustained by them as a result of regulatory failure. [6977]

**Ruth Kelly:** We have no plans to do so. The Government believe that the right course of action is to have an independent inquiry to ensure that the lessons are learned from what has happened. That is why we have asked Lord Penrose to examine the circumstances leading to the current situation at Equitable Life and to identify any lessons to be learned for the conduct, administration and regulation of life assurance.

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions the FSA held with Equitable Life about their decision to cut the value of with-profits pensions by 16 per cent. [6624]

**Ruth Kelly:** Decisions about the value of with-profits policies are a matter for the Board of Equitable Life. I understand that the FSA and the society have regular meetings to discuss a range of regulatory issues.

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the amount and likelihood of public liability in the case of Equitable Life. [7410]

**Ruth Kelly:** None.

**Mr. Chope:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Penrose inquiry will investigate allegations of maladministration by the DTI and Treasury in relation to regulation of Equitable Life; and if he will make a statement. [7289]

**Ruth Kelly:** The scope of the inquiry being conducted by Lord Penrose is a matter for him, subject to his terms of reference.

The terms of reference are

"To inquire into the circumstances leading to the current situation of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, taking account of relevant life market background; to identify any lessons to be learnt for the conduct, administration and regulation of life assurance business; and to give a report thereon to Treasury Ministers."

**Mr. Chope:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what target date has been given to Lord Penrose for the completion and publication of his report. [7287]

**Ruth Kelly:** The timing of the report into the findings of his inquiry is a matter for Lord Penrose. It is expected that the inquiry will report in the second half of next year.

**Mr. Chope:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when a decision will be taken on the date of publication of the report by the FSA into Equitable Life; [7290]

(2) when the Treasury will receive the report of the FSA into Equitable Life. [7285]

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when he received the Financial Services Authority's report on Equitable Life; and when he will publish this report; [7540]

(2) what issues he will take into account in deciding whether to publish the Financial Services Authority's report on Equitable Life. [7541]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Treasury received the FSA Report last week and is carefully considering it. The report will be published shortly.

**Mr. Chope:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Lord Penrose will be working full-time in the conduct of the inquiry of which he is chairman. [7286]

**Ruth Kelly:** Yes. Lord Penrose is working full-time on the inquiry.

**Mr. Chope:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Lord Penrose began work on his inquiry into Equitable Life; and what resources have been made available to him. [7288]

**Ruth Kelly:** Lord Penrose began work immediately after the announcement on 31 August that he would carry out an inquiry.

All the resources he considers necessary are available to him.

### Business Investment

**Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his forecast of the level of business investment is for *(a)* 2002 and *(b)* 2001. [7651]

**Ruth Kelly:** Updated forecasts for the UK economy will be published in this autumn's pre-Budget report.

### Pheasants

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he takes to ensure *(a)* pheasant-rearing operations and *(b)* pheasant shooting do not avoid (i) business rates and (ii) VAT through misclassification as agricultural practices; what estimate he has of the revenue each year from these sources; and if he will make a statement. [7250]

**Mr. Boateng:** The Valuation Office and Customs and Excise are responsible for ensuring compliance with the tax rules on business rates and VAT respectively. A valuation tribunal recently confirmed that pheasant-rearing operations are not agricultural and are therefore rateable, but shooting rights have not been treated as rateable since 1997. The sale of pheasants reared in a game hatchery is zero-rated for VAT. The granting of shooting rights is standard-rated, except when included with land sold exempt from VAT.

Estimates of the revenue each year from these sources are not readily available.

### Food Sales (VAT)

**Mr. Laws:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is his policy that hot food sold by supermarkets should be charged at the standard rate of value added tax. [6076]

**Mr. Boateng:** Food heated for the purpose of being consumed as hot food is charged at the standard rate of VAT.

### Child Poverty

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much would the Government have to increase *(a)* Working Families Tax Credit and *(b)* child benefit to achieve each of the Government's targets on child poverty using the Government's macro-economic assumptions and assuming that the proportion of children living in households below 60 per cent. of median household income otherwise remained the same. [6357]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The Government's third annual anti-poverty report "Opportunity for All" was published in September. The report shows encouraging progress against a range of indicators.

The Government's strategy is both to tackle current issues and to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage for the long term. This requires action beyond the WFTC and child benefit. The strategy includes: ensuring a decent family income—with work for those who can and extra support for those who cannot; access to excellent public services; targeted interventions for those with additional needs and at key stages in life; and harnessing the power and expertise of the voluntary and community sector.

### Balance of Payments Deficit

**Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his latest forecast is for the balance of payments deficit for 2001. [7646]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Government will publish updated forecasts for the UK economy in this autumn's pre-Budget report.

**Mr. Howard:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the balance of payments deficit and its consequences for the economic outlook. [7945]

**Ruth Kelly:** Treasury Ministers receive representations from a wide range of organisations and individuals on economic issues, and value their insights.

### Women Entrepreneurs

**Mr. Lazarowicz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that more women are provided with start-up finance by financial institutions, and that potential women entrepreneurs are not discriminated against by financial institutions in the provision of such finance. [6651]

**Ruth Kelly:** The latest version of the Banking Code, which came into force on 1 January 2001, includes a key commitment that explicitly states that the banks will make sure that their products and services meet the relevant laws and regulations that relate to discrimination.

Women will also benefit from all of the 96 projects supported through the Development Fund element of the DTI's Phoenix Fund. Some 16 of these projects specifically single out women for help in setting up or developing their own businesses.

### Foster Carers (Allowances)

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Inland Revenue's future plans for the taxation of the different types of allowances payable to foster carers. [6619]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The Inland Revenue is working with the Department of Health and a number of organisations representing foster carers to design a fair and simple method by which foster carers can calculate their reward element by reference to standard, agreed, expenses. Alternatively, carers would be able to claim actual expenses. The Revenue hopes to be able to introduce the new arrangements for the tax year commencing 6 April 2002.

### Capital Gains Tax Receipts

**Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact the present decline in market values will have on his forecast revenue from Capital Gains Tax receipts in financial year 2001–02. [7649]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** Current levels and prospects for all relevant economic indicators are kept under continual review and will be taken into account in the next published forecast of Capital Gains Tax which will be published in the pre-Budget report.

### Departmental Spending

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the key objectives listed in the Treasury guidance for the forthcoming spending round; and what incentives his Department has put in place to ensure that departmental spending bids promote sustainable development. [7664]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Mrs. Lawrence) on 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, columns 38–39W. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will be conducting discussions with colleagues on the integration of the full range of sustainable development issues into departmental programmes over the course of the Spending Review.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total annual running costs for buildings used, owned or rented by his Department for each nation and region of the UK, and estimate the average cost per square metre for properties used by his Department as a whole, and by region and nation of the UK. [6873]

**Ruth Kelly:** The table lists the total running costs and average cost per square metre for buildings used, owned or rented by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Treasury Departments. The data are set out in a format that highlights figures by nation and region for the Department.

| *Nation/region* | *Total running costs (£)* | *Area in square metres* | *Average cost per square metre* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scotland | 30,759,058 | 185,996.5 | 165.37 |
| Wales | 14,391,570 | 35,446.0 | 86.80 |
| N. Ireland | 3,991,458 | 35,446.0 | 112.61 |
| England | | | |
| Central | 39,335,883 | 423,197.3 | 92.95 |
| London | 72,924,395 | 347,701.5 | 209.73 |
| North | 70,361,402 | 522,702.3 | 134.61 |
| South | 53,518,207 | 320,275.0 | 167.10 |

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the total amount of spending by his Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of his Department's total spending this constitutes; and if he will make a statement. [6875]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The table provides the information requested, for all Departments, based on departmental responsibilities prior to the machinery of Government changes announced in June 2001. The figures relate to total managed expenditure on services that is identifiable for the benefit of a particular population and are for 1999–2000. More information on public spending by country and region is available in Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2001–02 (Cm 5101), from which the underlying data for this answer have been taken.

*Total managed expenditure on services by country, 1999–2000*

*£ million*

| | *England* | *Scotland* | *Wales* | *Northern Ireland* | *Total identifiable* | *Non–identifiable* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Department for Education, Employment and Ofsted | 13,116.8 | 137.9 | 148.7 | 0.2 | 13,403.6 | 8.1 |
| Department of Health | 41,666.5 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 41,667.4 | 170.9 |
| DETR | 6,913.6 | 259.2 | 116.3 | 10.8 | 7,299.9 | 7.6 |
| Home Office | 3,300.1 | 49.2 | 194.7 | 16.1 | 3,560.1 | 20.8 |
| Lord Chancellor's Departments | 1,866.9 | 0.0 | 131.3 | 57.4 | 2,055.6 | 19.1 |
| The Law Officers' Departments | 312.8 | 0.0 | 21.8 | 0.4 | 334.9 | — |
| Ministry of Defence | — | — | — | — | — | 22,507.2 |
| Foreign and Commonwealth Office | — | — | — | — | — | 1,149.8 |
| Department for International Development | — | — | — | — | — | 2,240.8 |
| Department of Trade and Industry | 1,561.7 | 113.8 | 66.1 | 20.3 | 1,762.0 | 2,433.4 |

*Total managed expenditure on services by country, 1999–2000*

*£ million*

| | *England* | *Scotland* | *Wales* | *Northern Ireland* | *Total identifiable* | *Non–identifiable* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food | 2,654.2 | 120.2 | 59.0 | 44.3 | 2,877.7 | 331.0 |
| Department for Culture, Media and Sport | 2,272.7 | 156.0 | 309.6 | 48.1 | 2,786.4 | 75.2 |
| Department of Social Security | 73,780.4 | 8,494.9 | 5,298.7 | 33.3 | 87,607.3 | 753.6 |
| Scotland[1] | — | 9,671.2 | — | — | 9,671.2 | — |
| Wales[1] | — | — | 4,285.0 | — | 4,285.0 | 4.1 |
| Northern Ireland[1] | — | — | — | 9,538.0 | 9,538.0 | — |
| Chancellor of the Exchequer's Departments | 4.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 4.3 | 6,852.8 |
| Cabinet Office, Central Office of Information and Privy Council Office | — | — | — | — | — | 973.2 |
| Forestry Commission | 50.8 | 27.6 | 11.7 | 0.0 | 90.1 | — |
| Parliament and National Audit Office | — | — | — | — | — | 359.0 |
| Total | 147,500 | 19,031 | 10,643 | 9,769 | 186,943 | 37,907 |

[1] Include the Scottish Office, Welsh Office, Northern Ireland Office and all devolved expenditure

The £147.5 billion of identifiable expenditure for England breaks down as follows:

*Total managed expenditure on services by region, 1999–2000*

*£ million*

| | *North East* | *North West* | *Yorkshire and Humberside* | *East Midlands* | *West Midlands* | *South West* | *Eastern* | *London* | *South East* | *England* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Department for Education, Employment and Ofsted | 755.0 | 1,910.8 | 1,340.7 | 1,119.0 | 1,467.6 | 1,332.3 | 1,514.2 | 2,107.2 | 1,570.2 | 13,116.9 |
| Department of Health | 2,265.8 | 5,960.8 | 4,311.5 | 3,227.5 | 4,276.9 | 3,997.8 | 4,447.3 | 7,175.1 | 6,003.7 | 41,666.5 |
| DETR | 303.7 | 909.7 | 530.5 | 510.8 | 629.2 | 496.3 | 639.9 | 1,825.5 | 1,067.9 | 6,913.6 |
| Home Office | 170.6 | 495.2 | 360.5 | 342.1 | 327.8 | 336.5 | 323.1 | 384.2 | 560.1 | 3,300.1 |
| Lord Chancellor's Departments | 104.9 | 240.8 | 162.6 | 143.7 | 163.5 | 169.1 | 134.8 | 493.1 | 254.4 | 1,866.9 |
| The Law Officers' Departments | 17.7 | 56.1 | 32.0 | 22.6 | 26.8 | 24.4 | 27.4 | 64.1 | 41.6 | 312.8 |
| Department of Trade and Industry | 64.2 | 209.2 | 144.2 | 121.6 | 166.3 | 147.2 | 172.6 | 259.4 | 277.2 | 1,561.8 |
| Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food | 137.7 | 367.1 | 269.2 | 223.6 | 284.6 | 263.3 | 289.1 | 388.6 | 430.9 | 2,654.2 |
| Department for Culture, Media and Sport | 171.3 | 238.5 | 183.8 | 129.2 | 180.2 | 184.4 | 158.6 | 823.9 | 202.9 | 2,272.7 |
| Department of Social Security | 4,890.3 | 12,048.5 | 7,999.6 | 6,109.4 | 8,201.3 | 7,431.5 | 7,401.5 | 9,425.3 | 10,273.0 | 73,780.4 |
| Chancellor of the Exchequer's Departments | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 4.1 |
| Forestry Commission | 5.6 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.6 | 50.8 |
| Total | 8,887 | 22,443 | 15,341 | 11,955 | 15,730 | 14,389 | 15,114 | 22,953 | 20,688 | 147,501 |

### Petrol Smuggling

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the amount of petrol that was smuggled into (1) north-west England from the Irish Republic in each of the last five years; [7453]

(2) North Ireland from the Irish Republic in each of the last five years. [7454]

**Mr. Boateng:** Customs have no such estimates.

### Private Medicine (VAT)

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much VAT was raised at current prices from expenditure on private medical insurance and private medical care in the last financial year. [7793]

**Mr. Boateng:** No VAT was raised from expenditure on these services in the last financial year. Expenditure on private medical insurance and private medical care is exempt from VAT.

### Urban Regeneration Companies

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is his policy to ensure that urban regeneration companies benefit from *(a)* corporation tax credits and *(b)* other reductions in tax liabilities. [6443]

**Mr. Boateng:** The Government announced in Budget 2001 that they would consider the scope for providing a corporation tax relief for company donations to urban regeneration companies and similar bodies across the UK. This work is on-going.

When making any decision relating to taxation policy, the Chancellor considers all relevant economic, social and environmental factors.

### Air Passenger Duty

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what his latest estimate is of the yield from air passenger duty for 2001–02; and if he will make a statement; [7674]

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact the terrorist crisis will have on his forecast of revenue from air passenger duty in financial year 2001–02. [7648]

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**Mr. Boateng:** The latest published forecast of the yield from air passenger duty in 2001–02 is set out in the Financial Statement and Budget Report published on 7 March 2001. A routine forecast will be published in this autumn's pre-Budget Report.

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reduce air passenger duty. [7779]

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to make changes to air passenger duty; and if he will make a statement. [7669]

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to suspend air passenger duty. [7463]

**Mr. Boateng:** The Chancellor reviews all taxes in the context of his pre-Budget and Budget Statements.

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received since 11 September from the aviation industry about air passenger duty. [7658]

**Mr. Boateng:** We have received a number of such representations.

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of air passenger duty came from *(a)* commercial passengers and *(b)* non-commercial passengers in the last financial year. [7777]

**Mr. Boateng:** Air passenger duty returns do not show whether duty revenues have accrued from commercial or non-commercial passengers. It is therefore not possible to provide the requested breakdown of revenues.

### Lear's Macaws

**Mr. Boris Johnson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Customs and Excise investigation into the three Lear's Macaws seized in November 1998, indicating what steps are being taken to return them to Brazil for captive breeding and release of progeny to the wild. [7962]

**Mr. Boateng:** The Lear's Macaws were seized together with a number of other birds in May 1998. Following an investigation, Henry Sissen was convicted in April 2000 on four counts relating to the illegal importation of the Macaws and other birds, and sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment. He appealed against conviction and sentence, the conviction was upheld but the sentence was reduced to 18 months. In September this year a Confiscation Order was made reflecting Mr. Sissen's benefit from criminal activity in the sum of £150,000.

Mr. Sissen has since appealed against seizure. Customs cannot make a decision on the future of the birds until these proceedings are completed.

### Counter-terrorism (Customs and Excise)

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement on the contribution of Customs and Excise to the Government's counter-terrorism policy; [7657]

(2) what plans he has to *(a)* increase the number of posts in Customs and Excise and *(b)* redeploy staff within Customs and Excise as part of the Government's response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September. [7661]

**Mr. Boateng:** HM Customs and Excise plays a full and appropriate role in the Government's overall response to the threat from terrorism and associated criminality.

### Vehicle Tax Discs

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on extending the age exemption for tax discs applicable for cars over 25 years old to those aged 30 years old and over. [7609]

**Mr. Boateng:** The Chancellor makes decisions relating to taxation policy in the context of his Budget judgment.

### Advance Corporation Tax Credits

**Mr. Syms:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects of the abolition of advance corporation tax credits on dividend income for *(a)* pension funds and *(b)* the amount that employees need to save to ensure a comfortable retirement. [3579]

**Ruth Kelly:** The abolition of payable tax credits on dividends was part of a package of reforms that included cuts in corporation tax rates and the abolition of advance corporation tax. These changes were designed to improve the climate for long-term investment in the UK. In the long run, this should benefit all investors—including pension funds and those saving for retirement.

### Enhanced Capital Allowances Scheme

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the available funding for the Enhanced Capital Allowances Scheme. [7663]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The scheme for enhanced capital allowances for energy-saving investments is a tax relief for businesses that invest in designated energy-saving technologies. It is not a scheme that relies on a fund that is ring-fenced. The scheme enables businesses to write off immediately the whole of their qualifying spending against their taxable profits and thereby receive the benefit of a useful cash-flow boost.

### Correspondence

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was, for each year since 1995, (1) the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords; [7025]

(2) the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by his Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if he will make a statement. [7026]

**Mr. Boateng:** Treasury Ministers attach great importance to the efficient, effective and expeditious handling of correspondence and parliamentary questions.

Information relating to the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall is published by the Cabinet Office. The figures for 2000 were given on 6 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 324–28W, and on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W.

The number of written questions answered by Treasury Ministers in each House since 1995–96 is given in the table.

| | *House of Commons* | *House of Lords* |
|---|---|---|
| 1995–96 | 1,851 | N/A |
| 1996–97 | 657 | 29 |
| 1997–98 | 4,554 | 282 |
| 1998–99 | 2,097 | 156 |
| 1999–2000 | 2,857 | 274 |
| 2000–01 | 1,297 | 107 |

The information sought by the hon. Member concerning average and other response times for parliamentary questions is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Financial Services and Markets Act (Regulated Activities Order)

**Barbara Follett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what method he will use to update the Financial Services and Markets Act (Regulated Activities Order) 2001 to ensure that changes are made in such a way as to be easily comprehensible to the regulated community. [8120]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Government gave a commitment in the House of Commons during the passage of FSMA that there would at any time be a single RAO. This commitment could be interpreted as meaning that we should remake the RAO each time we needed to change it.

The normal practice when amending a statutory instrument is to make textual amendments only to the particular provisions affected, unless the changes are so substantial or widespread as to justify revoking the original instrument and re-making it (with amendments) in its entirety. Re-making the entire RAO every time we need to amend it (however minor the changes) would differ from that usual practice. From time to time we will need to adjust the RAO, for example to reflect developments in the market, or changes to European legislation. If we remade the entire RAO each time, this would impact on the numerous other Statutory Instruments, together with rules made by the Financial Services Authority, which refer to the RAO, and would be likely to necessitate consequential changes to these. The overall effect might be to make the body of law of which the RAO is a part less rather than more clear to the regulated community.

Another disadvantage of re-making the entire order is that it would be difficult for readers to tell readily what had changed. Each time the order was remade the general reader would have to buy the complete new version.

Having consulted the industry and received its general support, we intend following standard practice and amending the RAO rather than completely re-making it, for changes to the RAO that do not involve a wholesale revision of the order. This will reduce the number of consequential amendments to other legislation (including FSA rules) as compared to remaking the entire order. To aid users of the order further we will provide an "unofficial" consolidated version on the HMT website, which will give the up-to-date version of the complete order as amended, at any given time. We will consider re-making the RAO only in the event of a wholesale revision of the order, and in such circumstances we would then take the opportunity to consolidate earlier orders amending the RAO.

### Flooding (Insurance)

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to secure an extension to the agreement reached with the Association of British Insurers in respect of insurance cover available to properties subject to flooding. [8007]

**Ruth Kelly:** The agreement among ABI members is that they will continue to provide flood cover, except in exceptional circumstances, for domestic properties and small businesses which they currently insure, during 2001 and 2002. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for flood defence in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and I met the Association of British Insurers on 5 September to discuss our mutual aim of ensuring that affordable flood insurance cover continues to be generally available after December 2002.

The Government are acting to reduce flood risk, through substantial increases in investment in flood and coastal defence (which now totals over £400 million a year). Flood defences are being repaired, renewed, maintained and improved. The flood warning scheme is being continually improved. The Government have issued strengthened guidance to local planning authorities on control of development in flood risk areas, and are reviewing the financial and institutional arrangements under which the flood defence service is delivered. These are the chief concerns raised by the ABI. The Government are continuing to work with the ABI on these issues.

### Pool Re

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the annual premiums collected and payments made have been in each year since the establishment of Pool Re. [8018]

**Ruth Kelly:** Pool Re was established on 1 January 1993. The information is as follows:

*£ million*

| | *Gross written premiums* | *Paid claims* |
|---|---|---|
| 1993 | 222.1 | 47.6 |
| 1994 | 389.3 | 93.2 |
| 1995 | 195.8 | 86.4 |
| 1996 | 287.2 | 94.3 |
| 1997 | 318.8 | 124.9 |
| 1998 | 173.2 | 95.6 |
| 1999 | 50.8 | 42.4 |
| 2000 | 56.0 | 14.3 |
| Total | 1,693.2 | 598.7 |

### UK Economic Outlook

**Mr. Howard:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the effect on individual sectors of the UK economy of the terrorist attacks on the US. [7704]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Government monitor all sectors of the UK economy as a part of their commitment to effective economic surveillance and management. We will present to Parliament our second annual forecast for the UK economy in the forthcoming pre-Budget report. The Government continue to receive a wide variety of representations from individuals, business and organisations in all sectors of the economy.

**Mr. Howard:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if Treasury officials are planning to revise UK GDP growth projections downwards to 1.5 per cent. this year; [7946]

(2) what assessment he has made of the consequences for the public finances of the changing economic outlook. [7947]

**Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make an assessment of the reduction in tax revenues that would result from a 1 per cent. reduction in GDP growth between now and October 2002; [7645]

(2) if he will make an assessment of the effect of a 1 per cent. reduction in economic growth in the next year on his forecast of net public sector borrowing in financial year 2002–03. [7650]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The Government's latest forecasts for the UK and world economies and the public finances were published in "Budget 2001" (HC 279). Updated forecasts will be presented as part of the forthcoming pre-Budget report.

### Terrorist Bank Accounts

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he has taken in respect of known terrorists' bank accounts since 11 September. [7312]

**Ruth Kelly:** Since the events of 11 September the UN Security Council has passed a resolution calling upon States to freeze the assets of terrorists. The Government have implemented this resolution (UNSCR 1373) by way of an Order in Council (SI No. 3365). The Government are in the process of notifying banks and financial institutions of known terrorists, such as those detailed in the 24 September US Executive Order, as and when they are issued.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reform the Private Finance Initiative. [7786]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The underlying principles applying to all types of partnership were set out in "Public Private Partnerships—the Government's Approach" which was published last year. Copies are available in the Library of the House and are accessible on the Treasury's website www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/docs/2000.ppp.html.

Consistent with these principles a number of significant improvements have been made to the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) since the Government took office in 1997.

Further refinements to improve value for money continue to be implemented, including expanded and revised guidance on Standardisation of PFI Contracts, which is expected to be issued before the end of the year.

### Financial Exclusion

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he is taking to reduce financial exclusion among persons without a bank account. [7782]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Government attach great importance to tackling financial exclusion—it is a key part of our strategy for ending social exclusion. Details of measures being taken to reduce financial exclusion can be found in the "National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: Policy Action Team Audit" report, a copy of which is in the Library.

### Bureaux de Change

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the Government's proposals are for regulating bureaux de change; and what plans he has for *(a)* consultations with the industry, *(b)* the timetable for regulation, *(c)* registration requirements, *(d)* the establishment of a regulating body and *(e)* regulating impact assessment. [8014]

**Ruth Kelly:** A consultative document on a proposed regulatory regime for bureaux de change is being published today. Copies are available in the Vote office and the Library of the House.

### Wind-powered Electricity

**Mr. Carmichael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much income has been received by the Crown Estate from wind-powered electricity generating installations situated offshore in the 2001–02 financial year; [7330]

(2) how much income was received by the Crown Estate from wind-powered electricity generating installations situated offshore in *(a)* 1996–97, *(b)* 1997–98, *(c)* 1998–99, *(d)* 1999–2000 and *(e)* 2000–01; [7332]

(3) how much income from wind-powered electricity generating installations situated offshore the Crown Estate is projected to receive for the 2001–02 financial year; [7331]

(4) how many wind-powered electricity generating stations situated offshore are projected to pay rent to the Crown Estate during the current financial year; [7325]

(5) how many wind-powered electricity generating stations situated offshore paid rent to the Crown Estate Commission in the financial year 2000–01. [7329]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The Blyth Offshore Wind Farm is currently the only offshore wind-powered electricity generating station. In previous financial years the Crown Estate has received no income from this source; during the current financial year it has been paid £2,500 base rent and is due 0.5 per cent. of the Gross Turnover for the first Turnover period or (if greater) £2,500.

## Partnerships UK

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) which companies successfully bid for 51 per cent. of Partnerships UK; and what are the shareholdings of each such company; [6477]

(2) what advice was sought by the Treasury prior to the acceptance of the financial contribution for a majority stake in Partnerships UK; [6478]

(3) if he will list the shareholders in Partnerships UK and the number of shares held by each as at *(a)* 30 November 2000, *(b)* 1 March 2001 and *(c)* 30 April 2001. [6476]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** HM Treasury sold a 51 per cent. shareholding in PUK plc to private sector investors, following an offer for sale issued on 26 February 2001.

Up until 31 March 2001 all shares in PUK plc were owned by The Solicitor for the Affairs of Her Majesty's Treasury. As at 31 March 2001 and 30 April 2001 the shareholders and the number of shares held by the private sector are as laid out in the table.

| | *Shares* | *"A" shares percentage holding* |
|---|---|---|
| Abbey National Treasury Services plc | 666,666 | 6.67 |
| Sun Life Assurance Society plc | 666,666 | 6.67 |
| The Prudential Assurance Company Limited | 666,666 | 6.67 |
| Barclays Industrial Investments Limited | 605,558 | 6.06 |
| The Royal Bank of Scotland plc | 605,558 | 6.06 |
| The Governor and Company of Bank of Scotland (Uberior Investment plc) | 444,444 | 4.44 |
| Halifax Project Investments plc | 444,444 | 4.44 |
| Serco Limited | 333,333 | 3.33 |
| The British Land Company (Boldswitch Limited) | 222,222 | 2.22 |
| Group 4 Falck Joint Ventures Limited | 222,222 | 2.22 |
| Jarvis plc | 222,222 | 2.22 |

The public sector retains 49 per cent. of Partnerships UK plc. Scottish Ministers acquired a 4.4 per cent. shareholding from HM Treasury on 23 April, so that on 30 April 2001 the public sector shareholding was 4.4 per cent. by Scottish Ministers and 44.56 per cent. by HM Treasury.

HM Treasury was advised throughout the sale process by: NM Rothschild and Sons acting as placement agent and financial adviser; Treasury Solicitors Department supported by Herbert Smith; and PriceWaterhouseCoopers who provided tax and accounting advice.

Partnerships UK was advised by UBS Warburg.

## Property Leases

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by the Treasury, including and distinguishing between the Department itself, its next step agencies and its non-departmental public bodies, differentiating between purchases made as a result of the creation of new bodies and those purchases made by established bodies. [7808]

**Ruth Kelly:** The table lists the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by the Treasury. The properties are listed by town for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. All properties are the responsibility of the Department itself and not next step agencies or non departmental public bodies. All entries in the table relate to purchases made by established bodies.

| *Building name* | *Location* | *Current value (£)* |
|---|---|---|
| Car Park | Birkdale Cricket Club | 12,631 |
| Norfolk House | Birmingham | 193,550 |
| Units 10/12 | Birmingham | 10,000 |
| Ground Floor, Pinnacle House | Bootle | 16,500 |
| Centenary Court | Bradford | 967,419 |
| Bristol International Airport | Bristol | 33,264 |
| Waldo Road | Bromley | 26,500 |
| Sherbourne House | Coventry | 1,306,800 |
| Innovis House | Crawley | 159,640 |
| Southern House | Croydon | 1,157,315 |
| St. James House | Derby | 153,200 |
| Room 305, Terminal Control Building | Dover | 2,140 |
| Eastbourne TEC | Eastbourne | 16,822 |
| Concorde House | Gatwick | 447,795 |
| Rooms 2070 and 3048, South Terminal Departures | Gatwick | 5,268 |
| Room 3049, South Terminals Departures | Gatwick | 4,620 |
| Car Park | Grimsby | 4,500 |
| Terminus House | Harlow | 66,000 |
| 2, Victoria Avenue | Harrogate | 165,223 |
| Rooms 1–6 and 1–7, Hamilton House | Harwich | 2,750 |
| Room 225, Terminal 2 | Heathrow | 14,571 |
| Custom House, Heathrow | Hounslow | 24,750 |
| Ashford International Terminal | Kent | 414 |
| Cromwell House | Lincoln | 146,000 |
| Queensgate House | Lincoln | 37,500 |
| Imperial Court | Liverpool | 613,133 |
| International House | London | 483,450 |
| Victory House | London | 1,250,000 |
| 31 High Street, Ealing | London | 32,000 |
| Customs House | London | 20,280 |
| Customs House Annexe | London | 2,045,498 |

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| Building name | Location | Current value (£) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Myddelton Place | London | 525,000 |
| Cheapside House, 138 Cheapside | London | 189,833 |
| Eastcheap Court, 11 Philpot Lane | London | 1,129,541 |
| Terminal Building | Luton | 127,967 |
| The Royal Exchange | Manchester | 54,991 |
| Rooms 27 and 28, Terminal 1, Manchester Airport | Manchester | 3,300 |
| Room 6, Terminal 1, Manchester Airport | Manchester | 2,600 |
| Dobson House | Newcastle upon Tyne | 195,526 |
| Unit 9 Lendal Court | Nottingham | 3,300 |
| Trinity House | Oxford | 412,162 |
| Plot 3400 | Oxford | 271,422 |
| Nash Court | Oxford | 116,519 |
| Stuart House | Peterborough | 75,000 |
| St. Mark's House | Preston | 312,897 |
| St. Mary's House | Preston | 252,103 |
| Guild Centre | Preston | 115,650 |
| RFTU | Purfleet | 4,800 |
| Kings Wharf | Reading | 327,250 |
| Harbour Masters Office | Rye | 900 |
| Cathedral Court | Sheffield | 124,576 |
| Shepperton House | Shepperton | 58,675 |
| New Mayfield House | Shrewsbury | 91,875 |
| Cavendish House | Skipton | 25,865 |
| John kEya House | St. Austell | 21,500 |
| Ocean House | St. Leonards | 114,310 |
| Room 623, Stansted Airport | Stansted | 3,800 |
| George Stephenson House | Stockton | 428,762 |
| Dunedin House | Stockton on Tees | 175,305 |
| St. Marks House | Teesside | 151,400 |
| Hanover House | Telford | 252,988 |
| Hollinswood House | Telford | 57,800 |
| St. James House | Telford | 365,330 |
| Custom House | Tilbury | 68,000 |
| Blencathra House | Whitehaven | 122,446 |
| Airport Terminal | Yeadon | 10,596 |
| Swinson House | York | 78,000 |
| Leeman House | York | 105,300 |
| Castlewellan Road | Banbridge, Co. Down | 31,150 |
| Mill House | Coleraine | 18,000 |
| Clarendon House | Edinburgh | 542,575 |
| Building 388 | Prestwick | 38,800 |

*Note:*
Total number of properties—72.

## Annuities

**Richard Ottaway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to amend the obligation for pension holders to take out an annuity. [7443]

**Ruth Kelly:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) on 3 July 2001, *Official Report,* column 125W.

## Devolved Assemblies

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his policy is with regard to *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in his Department giving evidence to (i) Scottish Parliament, (ii) Welsh Assembly and (iii) Northern Ireland Assembly Committees; and to what categories of document he gives (A) full access, (B) restricted access and (C) no access to (1) Scottish Parliament, (2) Welsh Assembly, (3) Northern Ireland Assembly and (4) House of Commons Select Committees. [7027]

**Ruth Kelly:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Cabinet Office has given him today.

## Ministerial Visits

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement; [6880]

(2) if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement. [6879]

**Ruth Kelly:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him today by the Prime Minister, *Official Report,* column 823W.

## Statistics

**Mr. Webb:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of women born between 24 September and 25 December 1941 who are alive. [7569]

**Ruth Kelly:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the National Statistician. I have asked him to reply.

*Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Steve Webb, dated 15 October 2001:*

As National Statistician I have been asked to reply to your recent question concerning the number of women born between 24 September and 25 December 1941 who are alive (7569).

It is estimated that there are 72 thousand women in the United Kingdom who were born between these dates.

This figure has been derived using the latest available national population projections produced by the Government Actuary's Department. These estimate that the total number of women in the United Kingdom reaching the age of 59 by June 2001 is 306.4 thousand. These women will have been born between July 1941 and June 1942.

Data on the pattern of births in 1941 and 1942 from the Office for National Statistics indicates that of the total number of 59 year old women in June 2001, 72 thousand can be estimated as having been born between 24 September and 25 December 1941.

## Income Tax Relief

**Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have benefited from income tax relief as a result of purchasing a stakeholder pension. [7917]

**Ruth Kelly:** All those who have contributed to a stakeholder pension will benefit from income tax relief—over 350,000 by 31 August 2001 according to the latest estimates from the Association of British Insurers. Provisional estimates of the number of contributors on whose behalf a repayment claim has been received by the end of July will be published on the Inland Revenue website at the end of the month.

## Departmental Staff

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the number of staff employed by his Department by region and nation of the UK; and if he will make a statement; [6870]

(2) how many and what proportion of each Civil Service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the UK; what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement. [6874]

**Ruth Kelly:** The information relating to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Departments is set out in tables by region and nation and by average salary and grade, which I am depositing in the Library of the House. The data are the latest information available and follow the definitions used in Table D of "Civil Service Statistics 2001" which was published on 31 August 2001, which is also available in the Library.

## Higher Rate Income Tax

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a breakdown of *(a)* how many persons paid income tax at the higher rate in each financial year since April 1997 and *(b)* how much was raised by the higher rate in current prices in each of the same years. [7784]

**Dawn Primarolo:** I refer the hon. Member to "Inland Revenue Statistics", tables 2.1 and 2.5, a copy of which is available in the Library. It can also be accessed on the Inland Revenue website www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats.

## TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

### Transport Infrastructure/House Building

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his Department's responsibilities are in relation to the environmental impact of *(a)* transport infrastructure development and *(b)* house building proposals. [7879]

**Ms Keeble:** Proposals for transport infrastructure and housing development, which are likely to have significant effects on the environment come within the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive (85/337/EEC as amended). The DTLR is the lead Department responsible for implementation of the Directive. The EIA procedure requires a developer to compile an Environmental Statement, which includes detailed information about the proposed development, the main effects it is likely to have on the environment, and the mitigation measures envisaged to deal with adverse effects. This information must be taken into account by the competent authority in reaching a decision on the proposal. For most projects falling within the scope of the Directive, for which planning permission is needed, the local planning authority is the competent authority, though in cases that are called in or subject to appeal the Secretary of State has to ensure compliance with EIA requirements. For some projects, for example proposals for new national roads, the Secretary of State is the competent authority.

### Farmers' Markets

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received regarding existing planning constraints on the development of farmers' markets. [7864]

**Ms Keeble:** The Department has received a range of representations on planning arrangements for the temporary use of land for purposes including farmers' markets. Part 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (GPDO) SI 1995 No 418 grants a general planning permission for the temporary use of land for up to 28 days in any calendar year, subject to a number of restrictions and conditions. In the case of markets, the permitted use is limited to a total of 14 days in recognition of the parking, litter and noise problems that often arise from such uses.

Guidance to planning authorities in PPG6 "Town Centres & Retail Developments" and PPG7 "The Countryside" encourage farm diversification and acknowledge that farm shops can help meet the demand for fresh produce as well as providing new sources of jobs and services in rural areas. Farmers' markets can also provide such a service. Farmers' markets have been established successfully throughout the country in recent years.

### Electoral Commission

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make it Her Majesty's Government's policy to provide all hon. Members with the full report of the Electoral Commission. [7124]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The Commission, which is directly answerable to Parliament, has placed a copy of its full report on the 2001 parliamentary general election in the Library of the House and has provided all hon. Members with a summary copy of the report. The full report, as well as the Commission's overview of the election campaign, is also available on the Electoral Commission's website. It would not be appropriate for the Government to supplement the independent Commission's measures, which in any event it could do only at disproportionate cost.

### Elections (Turnout)

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what discussions he has had on Her Majesty's Government's policy for increasing turnout at elections; and when he expects to issue proposals aimed at increasing turnout. [7123]

**Dr. Whitehead:** Earlier this month, I, together with the chairmen of the Electoral Commission and the Local Government Association, jointly invited local authorities to apply to run a wide range of innovative electoral pilot projects—including all-postal voting and on-line voting—to test new electoral procedures designed to increase the accessibility of voting and make it suit modern lifestyles more appropriately. Such changes to the method of voting should help to increase turnout, but only if, as the Electoral Commission has stated in its report on the 2001 general election,

> "voters also feel that the election is relevant to them and their vote matters".

The Commission is examining the reason for low turnout and will be making recommendations which we will consider very carefully.

### Vehicle Excise Licences

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what steps he plans to take to improve enforcement against vehicle excise licence offences; and if he will make a statement. [8008]

**Mr. Jamieson:** Vehicle excise duty evasion currently stands at 3.9 per cent. of revenue due (down from 4.1 per cent. in 1994). We have a number of measures in hand further to improve performance in this area.

As a result of the success of the wheelclamping scheme for VED evasion there are plans to expand this operation. In addition, last week the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency launched a scheme involving the use of mobile Automatic Number Plate Reader systems to detect and deter unlicensed vehicles on the move. DVLA is also working very closely with the police and local authorities to develop new methods for tackling the evasion problem.

### Fishing Communities

**Mr. Blizzard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, pursuant to

the answer of 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 320W, on fishing communities, if he will list the *(a)* ports affected and *(b)* weight of the catch at each port. [6644]

**Ms Keeble:** The ports used to calculate the allocation to RDAs for the Fisheries Regeneration Initiative, and the weight of their catch, are as follows:

*Thousand tonnes*

| *Port of landing* | *Quantity* |
|---|---|
| Newlyn | 6.79 |
| Hull | 9.47 |
| Brixham | 3.29 |
| Lowestoft | 4.45 |
| Grimsby | 5.09 |
| Plymouth | 1.60 |
| Whitby | 3.26 |
| Scarborough | 2.91 |
| Fleetwood | 2.30 |
| Shoreham | 0.82 |
| North Shields | 1.54 |
| Padstow | 0.60 |
| Looe | 0.94 |
| Bridlington | 1.20 |
| River Fal-Falmouth | 0.66 |
| Rye | 0.39 |
| Whitehaven | 0.80 |
| Hastings | 0.38 |
| Dungeness | 0.25 |
| Ramsgate | 0.41 |
| Hartlepool | 0.62 |
| Mevagissey | 0.48 |
| Newhaven | 0.45 |
| Appledore | 0.37 |
| Blyth | 0.72 |
| Folkestone | 0.27 |
| Amble | 0.78 |
| Poole | 0.21 |
| Portsmouth | 0.16 |
| Eastbourne | 0.19 |
| Southwold | 0.27 |
| Weymouth | 0.12 |

This information came from the 1999 catches of Demersal Species by Port of Landing compiled by MAFF. This was the most up to date information available when the calculations were made.

## Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of his Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7235]

**Dr. Whitehead:** Information on the normal retirement age and on compulsory early retirement or severance for my Department and for the executive agencies and public sector bodies for which it is responsible is as follows:

Grades listed[1]—normal retirement age of 65.

Bands 3 up to 6 (and equivalents) (i.e. EO, HEO, SEO, G7, G6 and equivalents)—normal retirement age of 60.

Senior Civil Servants—normal retirement age of 60.

There are the following exceptions:

Subject to the terms and conditions when they joined DTLR, there is a "short-service concession" for most non-senior civil servants in Bands 3 and above with less than 20 years accumulated service to continue to work until they reach 20 years or age 65, whichever is the earlier. This not available to Air Accident Inspectors, or those who became Crown employees working in the former Department of Transport after 31 March 1997.

The Department may also invite staff to stay beyond the normal retirement age but not beyond age 70.

Former Home Office staff who transferred to DTLR as part of the Machinery of Government changes in June 2001 are currently subject to the retirement policy of the Home Office.

In non-departmental public bodies where staff are included in the Local Government Pension Scheme, the retirement age is 65.

*Variations within the agencies*

The following executive agencies have these variations:

Driving Standards Agency: Senior Driving Examiners and Supervising Driving Examiners have a normal retirement age of 63; at present, to stay until 65 they would have to revert to Driving Examiners.

The Fire Service College: Industrial staff have a retirement age of 65.

The Planning Inspectorate: Planning Inspectors re-employed on flexible short-term contracts up to a maximum age of 65.

The QEII Conference Centre: Normal retirement age of 60 for all staff.

The Rent Service: Those staff transferred under TUPE protection from their local government employer have remained within the Local Government Pension Scheme. They may retire at age 65, although the scheme does allow them to retire at 60 should they so wish.

Vehicle Inspectorate: Industrial employees Band 1 (Tester/Handy Person) in post by 1 May 1994 and over 50 can remain until 65. In other cases the retirement age is 60, with the exception of a short service concession for Band 1 Testers and Band 2 AVEs provided they were in post prior to 31 March 1997.

*Compulsory early retirement or severance.*

In exceptional cases, such as redundancy, staff may receive benefits calculated in accordance with the Civil Service Compensation Scheme. Staff aged 50 and over are normally considered for benefits under the early retirement provisions and staff under age 50 are considered for severance payments. Eligibility depends on age and length of service.

*Note*[1]

Crown employees who worked in the former Department of the Environment

Administrative Assistant

Administrative Officer

Assistant Scientific Officer

Chief Typing Manager

Communication Officer I

Communication Officer II

Communication Officer III

Communication Officer IV

Housing and Planning Inspectors (main grade and senior inspectors)

Personal Secretary
Process and General Supervisory Grades
Senior Personal Secretary
Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent Custody Guards
Support Manager I
Support Manager II
Support Manager III
Support Grade I
Support Grade II
Support Grade IIA
Technical Grade 1 and 2
Trainee Typist
Typing Manager
Typist

Crown employees who worked in the former Department of Transport

Administrative Assistant
Administrative Officer
Assistant Scientific Officer
Chief Typing Manager
Civil Engineer (SPTO and below)
Personal Secretary
Process and General Supervisory D
Process and General Supervisory E
Senior Personal Secretary
SGB2 (Cleaner—less than 10 hours weekly)
Stores Officer Grade D
Support Grade—Band 1
Support Grade—Band 2
Support Grade—Band 2A
Support Manager 1
Support Manager 2
Support Manager 3
Teleprinter operator
Typing Manager
Typist and Trainee Typist.

## London Underground

**Tom Brake:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what records are kept of temperatures in carriages on London Underground trains. [6025]

**Mr. Jamieson:** This is an operational matter for London Underground, who inform me that they do not routinely record temperatures in trains and stations. In all instances of customers taken ill on trains and stations, where heat may be a contributing factor, this will be recorded as such.

## Section 28

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to repeal Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. [7641]

**Mr. Raynsford:** The Government are committed to the repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. We shall do so as soon as parliamentary time is available.

## Planning

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the implications of the Human Rights Act 1998 for planning appeals and, in particular, for third-party objectors to planning applications. [7506]

**Ms Keeble:** We assessed the implications of the Human Rights Act (HRA) for planning legislation and procedures before the Act came into force. We do not consider that there is any need on HRA grounds for changes to the appeals system generally or specifically in relation to third party objectors.

**Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what powers local authority planning officers have to require those proposing to convert existing buildings into flats to provide new shop fronts, pay for repairs to pavements and make a contribution towards local educational provision; and what powers local authority planning officers have to fix rents in respect of the new flats. [7675]

**Ms Keeble:** Under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as substituted by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, a planning obligation may be agreed between a Local Planning Authority and a developer. A planning obligation may require or restrict specified activities to be carried out and may require payments to be made to the authority either in a single sum or periodically. Such obligations could therefore cover provision of new shop fronts; payment for repairs to pavements; contributions towards local education provisions; and the fixing of rents, if this amounted to a restriction on the use of land. However, planning obligations should only be sought where they are necessary to make a proposal acceptable in land-use planning terms. In addition, they must be: relevant to planning; directly related to the proposed development; fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and reasonable in all other respects.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many planning applications have been refused by local authorities and the planning inspectorate on the basis of human rights violations as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998, section 6(1) and in the Maastricht treaty, article 130r2; what action he will take against local authorities that refuse planning applications on such grounds; and if he will make a statement. [7990]

**Ms Keeble:** The information requested is not available. Planning applications and appeals are decided taking into account all of the relevant planning issues—one of which may in some cases be human rights. The introduction of the Human Rights Act means that all public authorities, including central Government and local authorities, must act compatibly with convention rights. It is ultimately for the courts to decide whether an individual's human rights have been unfairly interfered with in a particular case.

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many planning applications in Hampshire have been called in by him on grounds relating to the proposed housing densities in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999 and *(c)* 2000, indicating the specific reasons in each case. [6019]

**Ms Keeble:** No planning applications were called in 1998 or 1999 in Hampshire on grounds relating to housing densities. In year 2000, two planning applications in Hampshire relating to the provision of housing were called in for the Secretary of State's decision. In both cases the Secretary of State indicated that he wished to be informed, among other things, about the relationship of the proposed development to Government policy in Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG3, in particular in respect of the proposed density of the development, the advice in the PPG on a sequential approach to brownfield/greenfield sites, car parking provision and the provision of affordable housing.

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what average time was taken by the Secretary of State to decide upon a planning appeal against a decision made by Fareham borough council once an inspector had submitted his report to him in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999 and *(c)* 2000; [6271]

(2) what average time was taken for an inspector to report to the Secretary of State on an appeal against a planning decision made by Fareham borough council in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999 and *(c)* 2000. [6268]

**Ms Keeble:** In 1998 two planning appeals arising in Fareham borough council area were recovered for decision by the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. The average time taken for the Inspector to report to the Secretary of State was 78 days. The average time taken by the Secretary of State to decide the appeals once the Inspector had submitted his report was 46 days.

No recovered planning appeals in Fareham were decided by the Secretary of State in 1999 or 2000.

### Train Franchises

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when the refranchising of South West Trains to Stagecoach was agreed by the SRA; and when it is planned to sign the franchise agreement. [7994]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The Strategic Rail Authority signed Head of Terms with Stagecoach as the preferred counterparty for the replacement South West Trains franchise on 30 March 2001. The parties are working towards signature of a franchise agreement and an announcement will be made in due course.

### Night Flights

**Mr. Colman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what plans he has to assess the environmental disbenefits of night flights; [8022]

(2) what plans he has to assess the contribution that night flights make to the *(a)* national and *(b)* London economy; [8021]

(3) what plans he has to implement the decision of the European Court of Human Rights on night flights; and if he will make a statement. [8020]

**Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when the Government will issue their response to the ruling of the European Court on Human Rights on the future of night flights at Heathrow Airport; and if he will make a statement. [7535]

**Mr. Jamieson:** We will study the judgment carefully before deciding what action may be necessary. The judgment cannot become final for at least three months. There will be no immediate changes to the present situation.

The Government are already in the process of commissioning a major study to reassess attitudes to aircraft noise, which will include further research into subjective responses to annoyance by night and by day. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 8 May 2001, *Official Report*, column 41W, to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Andy King). It would be premature to initiate further studies into any other aspects of night flights while we are considering the implications of this judgment.

### Housing Stock

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the average expenditure on capital improvements of *(a)* council and *(b)* registered social landlords in each year since 1997 is; and what plans he has to change the rule on capital investments in local authority housing. [7626]

**Ms Keeble:** The average expenditure on capital improvements by council landlords in each year since 1997 are 1997–98: £446 (22 per cent. of dwellings received work), 1998–99: £490 (23 per cent. of dwellings received work), 1999–2000: £479 (23 per cent. of dwellings received work). 2000–01 is £627 (this is a provisional figure based on authorities planned expenditure). Corresponding data are not collected centrally from Registered Social Landlords. We announced our intention to end direct control of local authority borrowing as part of a wider move to reform the local authority capital finance system. Details on the operation of the revised arrangements will be included in a White Paper, due to be published in the next few months.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his estimate is of the cost of holding housing stock transfer ballots per dwelling affected by local authority district that have conducted ballots in the last five years. [7063]

**Ms Keeble:** We do not hold this information.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list for each of the past five years the total housing stock for English local authorities held by *(a)* local councils, *(b)* registered social landlords and *(c)* housing companies. [7064]

**Ms Keeble:** The estimated total of the housing stock of local authorities and registered social landlords in England are given in the table.

*Number of dwellings (thousand)*

| *As at 1 April* | *Local authority* | *Registered social landlords* |
|---|---|---|
| 1996 | 3,470 | 942 |
| 1997 | 3,401 | 989 |
| 1998 | 3,309 | 1,049 |
| 1999 | 3,178 | 1,162 |
| 2000 | 3,012 | 1,278 |

The number of dwellings held by housing companies is much smaller and is not distinguished from the numbers given.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what information he has collated on the number of *(a)* families in bed and breakfast, *(b)* families in other temporary accommodation and *(c)* total waiting lists for each London borough. [7627]

**Ms Keeble:** My Department seeks information about local authorities' activities under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1996 on the quarterly P1 (E) housing returns. Data, which relate to households rather than individuals, include the number of households being temporarily housed by the authority, and separately distinguish those in bed-and-breakfast hotels, as well as other types of property such as hostels or privately leased accommodation. This information is summarised in a quarterly Statistical Release, the most recent of which was published on 12 September 2001 covering results up to the end of June 2001. Copies are available in the Library of the House and are on the DTLR website.

Annual Housing Investment Programme (HIP) returns also seek basic data on the total number of homeless households accommodated on 31 March, and this year additionally asked for confirmation of those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. As in previous years, the 2001 HIP return also sought a range of summary information about the number of households on local authorities' housing registers. HIP data are made available on the DTLR website normally in December once the data have been checked and confirmed by the authorities.

The latest available information as reported by London boroughs is presented in the table. This represents households without distinguishing between family groups and individuals.

*London boroughs' reported action under the homelessness provisions of Housing Acts*

*Decisions made during the period[1] April to June 2001*

| | *Accepted as being homeless and in priority need* | *Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so* | *Eligible, homeless but not in priority need* | *Accommodated by the authority on 30 June 2001 in bed and breakfast* | *Number of households on the Housing Register[2] as at 1 April 2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barking and Dagenham | 38 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 1,925 |
| Barnet | 331 | 11 | 101 | 139 | 5,489 |
| Bexley | 104 | 3 | 150 | 84 | 3,592 |
| Brent | 282 | 11 | 59 | 625 | 12,603 |
| Bromley | 198 | 11 | 103 | 102 | 3,264 |
| Camden | 288 | 25 | 87 | 46 | 5,884 |
| City of London | 4 | [3]— | [3]— | 4 | 787 |
| Croydon | 275 | 12 | 347 | 500 | 6,265 |
| Ealing | 211 | 14 | 203 | 436 | 7,709 |
| Enfield | 315 | 4 | 57 | 268 | 6,001 |
| Greenwich | 297 | 15 | 82 | [3]— | 5,473 |
| Hackney | 209 | 3 | 25 | 160 | 7,011 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 189 | 3 | 22 | 423 | 4,726 |
| Haringey | 320 | 6 | [3]— | 191 | 9,510 |
| Harrow | 98 | 16 | 81 | 101 | 2,610 |
| Havering | [4]— | [4]— | [4]— | [4]— | 1,738 |
| Hillingdon | 313 | 10 | 103 | 473 | 3,656 |
| Hounslow | [4]— | [4]— | [4]— | [4]— | 5,017 |
| Islington | 277 | 13 | 229 | 118 | 11,590 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 165 | 12 | 31 | 699 | 8,206 |
| Kingston upon Thames | [4]— | [4]— | [4]— | [4]— | 3,113 |
| Lambeth | 312 | 24 | 61 | 261 | 16,220 |
| Lewisham | 263 | [3]— | 143 | [3]— | 9,774 |
| Merton | 44 | 4 | 36 | 36 | 3,920 |
| Newham | 375 | 18 | 98 | 820 | 11,107 |
| Redbridge | 109 | 7 | 3 | 242 | 3,555 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 76 | 11 | 32 | 106 | 4,992 |
| Southwark | [4]— | [4]— | [4]— | [4]— | 5,543 |
| Sutton | 124 | 14 | 69 | 54 | 2,154 |
| Tower Hamlets | 357 | 13 | 14 | 212 | 6,751 |
| Waltham Forest | 289 | 25 | 67 | 144 | 7,476 |
| Wandsworth | 202 | 8 | 126 | 282 | 2,441 |
| Westminster | 291 | 17 | 172 | 901 | 8,099 |

[1] Decisions during the quarter are those where applicant households were found to be homeless and eligible for assistance under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1996 and associated legislation.

[2] Local authorities have different practices for compiling and managing housing register/waiting lists which mean that simple comparisons between authorities can be misleading.

[3] Nil

[4] Information not reported

*Source:*

DTLR quarterly P1 (E) housing activity and annual Housing Investment Programme returns

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**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will estimate the average investment by *(a)* registered social landlords and housing companies and *(b)* local authorities per dwelling where a large scale stock transfer ballot has been held. [6999]

**Ms Keeble:** The information requested cannot be provided for registered social landlords and housing companies because neither the Department nor the Housing Corporation collect or hold data in this form. For those local authorities where there has been a "no" vote in respect of large scale voluntary transfer, the table sets out average investment per local authority dwelling on an annual basis, derived from local authority Housing Investment Programme returns.

*Average expenditure per local authority dwellings*

*£000*

| | *1989–90* | *1990–91* | *1991–92* | *1992–93* | *1993–94* | *1994–95* | *1995–96* | *1996–97* | *1997–98* | *1998–99* | *1999–2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rochford—November 1988 | 261 | 197 | 177 | 310 | 372 | n/a | 302 | 376 | 167 | 326 | 205 |
| Salisbury—December 1988 | 364 | 59 | 111 | 82 | 161 | 195 | 196 | 257 | 489 | 241 | 265 |
| Arun—January 1989 | 738 | 716 | 494 | 734 | 668 | 1,103 | 1,009 | 542 | 672 | 908 | 568 |
| Three Rivers—March 1986 | 124 | 384 | 193 | 293 | 421 | 1,139 | 1,334 | 966 | 1,030 | 1,552 | 1,695 |
| Canterbury—November 1989 | — | 666 | n/a | 538 | 444 | 755 | 619 | 631 | 851 | 616 | 1,141 |
| Brentwood—November 1989 | — | 146 | n/a | 237 | 267 | 317 | 272 | 190 | 225 | 225 | 256 |
| Redbridge—December 1989 | — | 833 | 1,108 | 1,165 | 821 | 883 | 1,315 | 1,206 | 921 | 1,089 | 964 |
| Bournemouth—January 1990 | — | 416 | 553 | 452 | 376 | 419 | 383 | 287 | 206 | 182 | 181 |
| Wokingham—April 1990 | — | 154 | 248 | 618 | 647 | 583 | 700 | 319 | 445 | 452 | 435 |
| South Holland—July 1990 | — | — | 392 | 461 | 442 | 485 | 485 | 514 | 559 | 579 | 490 |
| North Kesteven—December 1990 | — | — | 447 | 589 | 735 | 825 | 667 | 617 | 543 | 604 | 554 |
| Hillingdon—July 1992 | — | — | — | — | 723 | 796 | 904 | 864 | 824 | 773 | 895 |
| Kingston—August 1992 | — | — | — | — | 992 | 681 | 697 | 846 | 849 | 592 | 516 |
| North Somerset—August 1992 (Woodspring) | — | — | — | — | 708 | 722 | 783 | 589 | 584 | 572 | 518 |
| Westminster—October 1993 | — | — | — | — | — | 1,281 | 1,283 | 1,158 | 1,536 | 1,628 | 1,342 |
| Maidstone—November 1993 | — | — | — | — | — | 463 | 619 | 682 | 778 | 340 | 331 |
| Poole—November 1993 | — | — | — | — | — | 400 | 330 | 298 | 405 | 506 | 245 |
| Cherwell—April 1994 | — | — | — | — | — | 219 | 280 | 445 | 202 | 653 | 328 |
| Castle Point—September 1994 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 239 | 148 | 237 | 317 | 286 |
| Berwick—July 1996 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 419 | 377 | 309 |
| Cheltenham—August 1997 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 179 | 239 |
| Cambridge—February 1999 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 228 |

## Cycle Routes

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his estimate is of the total length of dedicated cycle routes in each London borough; and what the figures were for roads for each of the past five years. [6747]

**Mr. Spellar:** Policy on cycle routes in London is now a matter for the Mayor and Transport for London. However, information about the length of the London Cycle Network (LCN) in the London boroughs from April 1997 is set out in the table. Earlier information is not available. Any further information may be obtained from John Lee, the LCN Project Manager, at the following address:

Royal Borough of Kingston
Guildhall
High Street
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT1 1EU.

*Length in km*

| *Borough* | *April 1997* | *April 1998* | *April 1999* | *April 2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barking and Dagenham | 31.867 | 22 | 30.6 | 29.4 |
| Barnet | 37.131 | 47.7 | 56 | 62.3 |
| Bexley | 13.342 | 7.2 | 17.3 | 18.7 |
| Brent | 22.145 | 20.1 | 21.9 | 21.6 |
| Bromley | 57.597 | 66.5 | 66 | 67.3 |
| Camden | 18.048 | 19.1 | 26.1 | 22.5 |
| Croydon | 32.227 | 49 | 56.9 | 67 |
| Ealing | 65.267 | 65.3 | 64 | 63.5 |
| Enfield | 16.974 | 13.9 | 18.1 | 20.4 |
| Greenwich | 31.807 | 0 | 40.6 | 55.1 |
| Hackney | 18.772 | 20.8 | 20.7 | 20.7 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 34.37 | 38.3 | 40.4 | 39.5 |
| Haringey | 20.639 | 21.4 | 16.7 | 27.2 |
| Harrow | 3.208 | 5.2 | 4.4 | 5.3 |
| Havering | 8.242 | 21.4 | 15 | 30.7 |
| Hillingdon | 54.407 | 46.7 | 57.6 | 59.3 |
| Hounslow | 49.717 | 54.2 | 55.7 | 62.1 |
| Islington | 19.041 | 19.2 | 20.8 | 20 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 8.249 | 16.7 | 12.2 | 17.8 |
| Kingston Upon Thames | 41.617 | 49.5 | 48 | 46.1 |
| Lambeth | 7.508 | 12.6 | 28.3 | 12.4 |

*Length in km*

| *Borough* | *April 1997* | *April 1998* | *April 1999* | *April 2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lewisham | 13.448 | 14.9 | 28 | 35.3 |
| London | 0.019 | 0.2 | 0.7 | 9 |
| Merton | 24.107 | 34.9 | 34.6 | 37.2 |
| Newham | 2.994 | 22.7 | 21.2 | 34 |
| Redbridge | 27.699 | 29.8 | 30.6 | 32.9 |
| Richmond | 65.272 | 76.9 | 89.6 | 90.6 |
| Southwark | 22.598 | 41.1 | 55.8 | 67.8 |
| Sutton | 30.008 | 45.9 | 49.3 | 52.9 |
| Tower Hamlets | 21.504 | 23.9 | 27 | 30.7 |
| Waltham Forest | 36.882 | 49.3 | 45.3 | 53.5 |
| Wandsworth | 59.259 | 67 | 74.4 | 88.3 |
| Westminster | 11.914 | 31.3 | 42.2 | 44.3 |
| Total | 907.879 | 10,54.7 | 1,216 | 1,345.4 |

### Single Regeneration Budgets

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what monitoring of the accountability of single regeneration budgets is undertaken by his Department. [6945]

**Ms Keeble:** Responsibility for monitoring the accountability of single regeneration budget partnerships has been delegated to the Regional Development Agencies. In London, this function rests with the London Development Agency, who are responsible to the Mayor and the Greater London Authority.

My Department is responsible for the overall financial management and policy for the SRB programme. We monitor the RDAs' performance in managing the programme through the RDA sponsorship arrangements led by the Department of Trade and Industry.

From April 2002, the SRB will be subsumed into the new Single Programme announced by my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister on 9 March 2001.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what has been the expenditure to date of the Finsbury Park single regeneration budget; what its planned expenditure is in the remaining period of its life; and what monitoring of its expenditure is undertaken by his Department. [7552]

**Ms Keeble:** In London the Mayor and the London Development Agency are responsible for the single regeneration budget, including the monitoring of individual schemes. SRB expenditure to date on the Finsbury Park scheme is £3.4m out of the planned £25m over its lifetime.

### Government Office for London

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his estimate is of the annual cost of administration of the Government Office for London; and what his estimate is of future costs in each of the three years from April 2002. [6961]

**Ms Keeble:** The administration budget of the Government Office for London in 2001–02 is £12.6m.

For 2002–03 it is anticipated that the funding from DTLR, DTI and DEFRA will remain the same as 2001–02. However the DfES allocation is expected to reduce by £401k giving an overall figure of £12.2m. Funding for work to be undertaken on behalf of other Departments has yet to be agreed.

Estimated costs for 2003–04 and in 2004–05 is £11.8m, reflecting an expected further reduction in 2003–04 of DfES funding. These estimates do not anticipate the potential extension of GOL's work in new programmes.

### Tufnell Park

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what discussions have been held with Railtrack and Silverlink concerning the opening of a station at Tufnell Park on the Barking to Gospel Oak line; and if he will make a statement. [6946]

**Mr. Jamieson:** None. The Sponsors of any proposed new station should discuss feasibility initially with the train operator and Railtrack. The Strategic Rail Authority's Rail Passenger Partnership scheme is a potential source of funding for schemes which may not be commercial but offer wider benefits.

### Ebley Wharf

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will call in the planning application at Ebley Wharf, Stroud district following his announcement on building in the flood plains under PPG25. [6479]

**Ms Keeble:** The Secretary of State has considered whether to call-in the planning application at Ebley Wharf, Stroud district, against his policy for the use of call-in powers. Having carefully considered the issues raised, including those related to policy in the recently published PPG 25, it was decided not to intervene in this particular application.

### Mobile Phone Masts

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what consultations with interested parties he has had in relation to damages claims arising out of the impact of mobile phone masts following research being carried out into their effects on health, and the recommendations of the report of Sir William Stewart. [6490]

**Ms Keeble:** The Department has not been approached in relation to damage claims arising out of the impact of mobile phone masts following research being carried out into their effects on health, and the recommendations of the Report of Sir William Stewart.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will review planning guidance on mobile phone masts taking account of the decision of the Austrian high court in favour of Ms Wulf-Dietrich Rose against Max Mobil on 12 July. [6489]

**Ms Keeble:** The Supreme Court of Appeal of the Republic of Austria reported its decision on a case between Wulf-Dietrich Rose and Max Mobil on 26 April 2001. The case involved a claim for defamation and centres around the rules for freedom of expression. Planning Policy Guidance Note 8, 'Telecommunications' (PPG8) does not prevent freedom of expression. It is not therefore necessary to review PPG8 in the light of this case.

### Best Value

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his latest estimate is of *(a)* the cost and *(b)* the cash benefit to local authorities of implementing best value. [6266]

**Ms Keeble:** £52 million has been allocated in 2001–02 to local authorities in England and the Audit Commission to cover the cost of best value audit and inspection. No reliable estimates exist as to the other administrative costs incurred by authorities in complying with their duty under the Local Government Act 1999. It is for individual authorities to decide how to allocate their resources to achieve improvements in performance and cost efficiency, sufficient to meet the 2 per cent. per annum cost efficiency target for local government as a whole against an annual budget in 2001–02 of £57 billion.

### Local Transport Plans

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the cost of *(a)* preparing and *(b)* implementing local transport plans. [6267]

**Ms Keeble:** The introduction of local transport plans has been widely welcomed by local authorities. The Government expect that the move to five year plans, and the need to take a broader, more holistic view of planning transport in the context of related issues such as land use planning could produce cost savings and efficiency gains compared with the previous system of annual bidding.

Our Ten Year Plan for Transport provided a step change in investment for the implementation of local transport plans. Over the period of the Ten Year plan some £19.3 billion of capital resources are available. We announced in December 2000 an £8.4 billion package covering the first five years' of that investment.

### Local Roads

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what funds are available to enable local authorities to upgrade local roads to deal with the changes in traffic volumes arising from the Government's housing quotas. [6018]

**Ms Keeble:** The Government do not issue housing quotas. Housing requirements are established by local authorities and Regional Planning Bodies through the Regional Planning Guidance process and finalised by the Secretary of State.

Government planning policy seeks to promote more sustainable transport choices and to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, by accommodating housing principally on previously-developed land within urban areas and at locations highly accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.

Capital funding for local road improvements for authorities in England outside London is available through the local transport plan system. In developing and implementing their local transport plans, authorities need to ensure consistency between their proposed transport strategies and housing proposals contained within the relevant regional and local development plans.

### High Hedges

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will introduce legislation to control high hedges in residential areas. [6437]

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what proposals he has to introduce *(a)* planning and *(b)* other controls on high hedges. [7205]

**Ms Keeble:** The Government will introduce legislation giving local authorities powers to deal with complaints about high hedges in residential areas as soon as there is space in the parliamentary timetable.

**Dr. Stoate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will introduce legislation to give local authorities the power to fell nuisance cupressocyparis leylandii on private land. [7583]

**Ms Keeble:** As soon as there is space in the parliamentary timetable, we will introduce legislation giving local authorities the power to deal with complaints about high hedges on private land. Under our proposals, authorities would be able to require landowners to keep the height of problem hedges within specified limits, but their powers would not extend to felling.

### Prestwick Air Traffic Control Centre

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what assessment he has made of the impact on European and British air traffic cover of the postponement of the construction of the Prestwick air traffic control centre; [7423]

(2) what representations he has received from National Air Traffic Control about the postponement of the construction of the Prestwick air traffic control centre. [7421]

(3) what are the implications for air safety of the postponement of the construction of Prestwick air traffic control centre; [7424]

(4) what meetings she *(a)* has had and *(b)* has planned to discuss the postponement of the construction of the Prestwick air traffic control centre; [7418]

(5) if he will make a statement on progress with plans to construct an air traffic control centre at Prestwick. [7417]

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what is his estimate of the opening date of the new Prestwick air traffic control centre. [7841]

**Sandra Osborne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what recent changes there have been to the timetable for the planned operational date of the new Scottish air traffic control centre; and what ministerial approval is required for such changes. [7943]

**Mr. Jamieson:** National Air Traffic Services (NATS) remains committed to investing in the New Scottish Centre (NSC) at Prestwick as part of its two-centre strategy. However, the events of 11 September have led to a review of the phasing of NATS' capital investment plan, and my officials have been in close and continuing discussion with NATS and the Airline Group on these matters.

As a result of this review, and in the light of reduced traffic demand, the Government have agreed to a proposal to delay work on the NSC, which will result in a later operational date than originally planned. Work on the building will be suspended, following completion of the building design and piling contracts at the end of 2001. However, work will continue on evaluating systems solutions for this new centre. NATS will keep the position under review, and launch further work as soon as traffic forecasts make it prudent to do so.

The delay will not affect the service NATS provides to its customers or the high levels of safety it applies to operations.

## NATS

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what discussions he has had with the Airline Group since 11 September on the future of National Air Traffic Services; [7839]

(2) if he will make a statement on the sale of the National Air Traffic Services in respect of the downturn in air passenger demand since 11 September; [7843]

**Sandra Osborne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what discussions he has had with the Airline Group following the reduction in transatlantic air traffic; and if he will make a statement. [7942]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The events of 11 September are having a wide-ranging impact on the airline industry. National Air Traffic Services and the Airline Group are preparing their business plan in the light of this, and my officials are in close and continuing discussion with them.

**Mr. Laws:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his estimate is of the effect on Exchequer revenues of the sell-off of the National Air Traffic Services; and if he will make a statement. [6519]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The Government have received proceeds totalling almost £770 million from the sale of a minority share in National Air Traffic Services to the Airline Group. There is a further £35 million due as deferred proceeds.

## Central Railway

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement about the Government's policy towards the Central Railway project. [7659]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The Strategic Rail Authority has carried out, with the help of consultants, a high level review into Central Railway's proposals and has forwarded its report to my Department. The Government will take a view on the issues raised by the report and respond to Central Railway in due course.

## Bus Usage

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the total number of passenger miles travelled by bus in each of the last four years. [7621]

**Ms Keeble:** The Department does not collect separate information on bus passenger miles. Estimates are made of combined bus and coach passenger mileage, but these are not sufficiently robust to provide accurate year-on-year comparisons.

The number of passenger journeys is considered to be a better measure of bus use, and we have set a target to increase bus passenger journeys in England by 10 per cent. by 2010. We are monitoring this through a large annual sample survey, and the most recent figures for England are as follows:

*Bus passenger journeys*

| | *Million* |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 3,753 |
| 1997–98 | 3,773 |
| 1998–99 | 3,719 |
| 1999–2000 | 3,736 |

Provisional figures for 2000–01 will be published on 18 October.

## Jet-Skis

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many accidents including injury or fatalities to humans have taken place around the British coastline involving jet-skis in each of the last five years. [7622]

**Mr. Jamieson:** HM Coastguard incident reports record a total of 586 incidents involving personal watercraft between January 1997 and 30 September 2001 around the UK coastline. Four fatalities were recorded. No

information is available on the number of injuries. Records for 1996 are not readily available but a breakdown by year is provided in the following table.

| Year | Number of incidents | Number of fatalities |
|---|---|---|
| 1997 | 115 | 3 |
| 1998 | 140 | 1 |
| 1999 | 147 | 0 |
| 2000 | 150 | 0 |
| 2001[1] | 138 | 0 |

[1] to 30 September 2001

### Key Worker Housing Grants

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list those bids he has received from local authorities under the key worker housing grant scheme involving NHS staff. [7620]

**Ms Keeble:** Eight bids were received from local authorities under the Starter Home Initiative which included NHS staff among the groups targeted for assistance to purchase homes. These are:

London borough of Tower Hamlets

Guildford borough council

Southampton county council

Cotswold district council

Swindon borough council

Cambridgeshire county council on behalf of a consortium of employers

A joint bid from Bristol City council and South Gloucestershire council

A joint bid from Eastbourne borough council, Hastings district council, Lewes district council, Rother district council and Wealden district council.

A number of these bids will be administered by Registered Social Landlords. Bids to assist NHS staff were also submitted by other organisations including Registered Social Landlords.

### Swanick Air Traffic Control Centre

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the Government's latest estimate is of the opening date of the Swanick air traffic control centre. [7840]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The planned operational date for the New En Route Centre at Swanick remains 27 January 2002.

### Council Houses

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many council houses were built in London in the years *(a)* 1995–96, *(b)* 1996–97, *(c)* 1997–98, *(d)* 1998–99, *(e)* 1999–2000 and *(f)* 2000–01. [7842]

**Ms Keeble:** A total of 103 council houses were built between 1995 and 1998 and since then no council houses have been built to date. A breakdown of actual figures by borough is given in the table:

*Council houses built between 1995 to 2001*

| | 1995–96 | 1996–97 | 1997–98 | 1998–99 | 1999–2000 | 2000–01 | Total 1995 to 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barking and Dagenham | — | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | 0 |
| Barnet | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bexley | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brent | — | 0 | 0 | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | 0 |
| Bromley | — | 0 | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | 0 |
| Camden | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| City of London | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Croydon | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ealing | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | [1]— | 0 |
| Enfield | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Greenwich | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hackney | — | 22 | 34 | [1]— | 0 | 0 | 56 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Haringey | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Harrow | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Havering | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hillingdon | — | [1]— | 2 | [1]— | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Hounslow | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Islington | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kingston upon Thames | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lambeth | — | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | 0 |
| Lewisham | — | [1]— | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Merton | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Newham | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Redbridge | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Richmond upon Thames | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Southwark | — | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sutton | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tower Hamlets | — | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | 0 |
| Waltham Forest | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wandsworth | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Westminster | — | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | [2]45 | 22 | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 103 |

[1] Source: DTLR Housing Stats. Data not available because the LA reported for nine months or less

[2] Total for 1995–96 sourced from DTLR Housing Stats 2000. Break down by each borough not available

### Infrastructure Projects

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will introduce proposals for a statutory duty to consult local residents on major infrastructure projects. [6565]

**Ms Keeble:** The local planning authority already has a statutory duty to advertise major development in a newspaper and either issue a site notice or notify neighbours.

The new measures for streamlining the handling of major infrastructure projects announced by my right hon. Friend on 20 July 2001 will ensure opportunities for the public to make their views known through consultation about statements of national infrastructure policy, a right to object before Parliament considers the principle of major infrastructure projects, and at public inquiries into the detailed aspects of projects.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what definition of a Crown development is used by his Department in relation to infrastructure projects. [6566]

**Ms Keeble:** "Crown development" is the common usage term for development by or on behalf of the Crown on Crown land, and as such is not defined in statute.

"Crown land" is defined in section 293 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as land where there is a Crown interest or a Duchy interest. "Crown interest" means an interest belonging to Her Majesty in right of the Crown or belonging to a Government Department or held in trust for Her Majesty for the purposes of a Government Department. "Duchy interest" means an interest belonging to Her Majesty in right of the Duchy of Lancaster or belonging to the Duchy of Cornwall.

There is no special meaning attached to "crown development" in relation to infrastructure projects.

### Correspondence

**Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will reply to the letters of the hon. Member for West Derbyshire dated 26 July and 10 September about planning consent for a housing development in Duffield, Derbyshire. [7970]

**Ms Keeble:** The Minister for Housing and Planning replied to the hon. Member on 14 September and 5 October respectively indicating that the Secretary of State would take account of the hon. Member's concerns, and those of his constituents, in his consideration of whether to call in an application for housing development in Duffield.

**Mr. Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will reply to the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford's letter of 26 February regarding channel tunnel rail link blight. [6552]

**Mr. Jamieson:** Following a thorough review of the case of his former constituents, I replied to my hon. Friend on 26 September.

### National Homelessness Strategy

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on what date the responses to the consultation national homelessness strategy will be published. [7826]

**Ms Keeble:** A summary of responses to the consultation on the national homelessness strategy will be published on the DTLR Housing internet site on 7 December 2001. Respondents to the consultation will be notified of its publication.

### Regional Chambers

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the *(a)* expenditure in each of the last five years was and *(b)* budgets for the years 2001–02 and 2002–03 are with respect to the acquisition of property for use by, or with respect to, regional chambers. [7823]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The regional chambers were designated by the Secretary of State following the establishment of Regional Development Agencies in 1999. They have been established voluntarily by bodies representing the interests of each region. Their running costs are a matter for the chambers and their members. The Government have however, allocated £500,000 this year to each regional chamber, with an additional £1 million for chambers to use collectively, to help them establish a stronger strategic and scrutiny role within the regions.

### Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

**Linda Perham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has for the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre. [7725]

**Dr. Whitehead:** My Department has undertaken a review of the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre, which has been an Executive Agency since 1989. The review considered all the organisational aspects for the agency, taking into account its role and past performance, its fit with wider objectives, and the relationship with other bodies in the public and private sectors. Staff and trade unions have been consulted as part of the review.

The key findings of the review were:

There have been substantial improvements in the centre's performance over the last 5 years, with a 30 per cent. increase in turnover. Current performance is considered to be near the optimum for conference use.

Most of the centre's business derives from the private sector and associations.

The centre is seen as an important London facility, attracting considerable business tourism.

The review does not recommend contracting out or privatisation, which it considers may be difficult to implement, and would be poor value for money. It also concluded that any market interest in the site is likely to relate to redevelopment for uses other than a conference centre.

In the light of the review findings, I have decided that the public sector status and role of the QEII conference centre should not be changed. I have, however, asked

officials, over the longer term, to keep under review options for ownership of the QEIICC within the public sector.

A summary of the review findings is being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### Working Time Directive

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the impact of the working time directive on the road haulage industry. [7462]

**Mr. Jamieson:** In March 1998, the Department of Trade and Industry published a regulatory assessment covering the costs and benefits of working time legislation. The assessment covered all sectors of employment in the UK, including excluded sectors such as the road haulage industry. A copy of the assessment was deposited in the Libraries of the House.

Since then, the Government have held regular meetings with both sides of industry to discuss the impact of the latest proposals on the haulage industry.

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the impact of the working time directive on the bus and coach industry. [7460]

**Mr. Jamieson:** In March 1998, the Department of Trade and Industry published a regulatory assessment covering the costs and benefits of working time legislation. The assessment covered all sectors of employment in the UK, including excluded sectors such as the bus and coach industry. A copy of the assessment was deposited in the Libraries of the House.

Bus drivers on local routes will not be affected by the latest working time proposals for mobile workers in the road transport sector. However, the Government have held regular meetings with both sides of the bus and coach industry to discuss the impact of the proposals on those parts of the industry which they will affect.

### Aviation and Airports

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he intends to publish a White Paper on aviation and airports. [7451]

**Mr. Jamieson:** We intend to publish an air transport White Paper in the second half of 2002.

### Night Working

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the impact on peak hour congestion of an eight-hour limit on night working for mobile workers. [7458]

**Mr. Jamieson:** From our regular meetings with industry, we are fully aware of the problem that an eight-hour limit for night workers is likely to have on daytime congestion. That is why the Government support the 10-hour limit included in the Council's common position.

### Road Safety

**Mr. Pollard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans the Government have to improve safety measures on *(a)* trunk roads and *(b)* roads extensively used by heavy goods vehicles. [7098]

**Mr. Jamieson:** In March of last year, the Government published their road safety strategy and casualty reduction targets for 2010 with the document "Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone". At the same time, the Highways Agency published a Strategic Plan for improving safety on the trunk road network in England. The documents describe the measures to improve road safety that will be a mixture of education, engineering and enforcement measures.

The Government's current targeted programme of improvements to trunk roads contains proposals for some 25 bypasses that will remove through traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles, from towns and villages. Additional schemes may well be added as a result of the programme of multi-modal studies currently being undertaken. The Government have also given the go-ahead for a further 23 bypass schemes on local authority roads in the last two years as part of the Local Transport Settlement. Bids for further schemes are currently being considered and decisions will be announced in December.

### East-West Transport Links

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the relative *(a)* cost and *(b)* environmental impact of upgrading east-west (i) road links and (ii) rail links between (A) Huntingdon and Cambridge, (B) Cambridge and Bedford, (C) Bedford and Milton Keynes and (D) Milton Keynes and Oxford. [7177]

**Mr. Jamieson:** In the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study, a full assessment of the relative costs and environmental impacts has been undertaken on a wide range of road and rail options for improving the links between Huntingdon and Cambridge. This study has now reported and the recommendations are being considered by the Regional Planning Body.

The London to South Midlands Multi-Modal Study will be looking at long term, sustainable solutions to the difficulties of east-west travel across the study area. In assessing possible solutions, infrastructure costs and their environmental impacts will be taken fully into account. This study is expected to report at the end of 2002.

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to upgrade east-west road links from *(a)* Huntingdon to Cambridge, *(b)* Cambridge to Bedford, *(c)* Bedford to Milton Keynes and *(d)* Milton Keynes to Oxford. [7176]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The east-west road links between Huntingdon and Cambridge have been studied by the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study. The consultants undertaking this study have made their recommendations and these have been considered by the Regional Planning Body for the East of England. The Regional Planning Body is expected to make its views known to the Secretary of State in due course.

East-west road links between Cambridge and Bedford, and between Bedford and Milton Keynes are being studied by the London to South Midlands Multi-Modal Study. This study commenced in 2000 and is expected to report at the end of 2002.

The Strategic Roads Network between Milton Keynes and Oxford is under continuous review, however at this stage the Government have no plans to upgrade the road links.

### Mobile Homes

**Mr. Swayne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he plans to bring forward legislation to amend the law affecting mobile homes. [7146]

**Ms Keeble:** Changes to the legislation relating to mobile homes were included in the recommendations of the Park Homes Working Party, published last year. We have consulted on, and are considering, the Working Party's recommendations.

### Gazumping and Gazundering

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what proposals he has to prevent gazumping and gazundering by house buyers and sellers. [7207]

**Ms Keeble:** As set out in our manifesto, we will make it easier for people buying and selling homes through a seller's pack. This will provide at the very start of the process information needed to enable home buyers and sellers to make informed decisions, and assist transactions to proceed smoothly. The seller's pack will reduce significantly the period between offer acceptance and exchange of contracts, thereby narrowing the window during which gazumping, gazundering and other problems can occur.

### Harbour Authorities

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what measures are in place to ensure that a harbour authority's powers and duties are not exercised to the detriment of other users or otherwise unfairly, where that harbour authority is also the dominant user of a harbour. [7192]

**Mr. Jamieson:** Harbour authorities derive their duties and powers from local and national legislation. Parliament has conferred those duties and powers in a way that strikes a balance between the two and it is incumbent upon harbour authorities to exercise them reasonably. There is no special provision for ports where the harbour authority is also a shipping operator. Parliament has not given my Department any general powers of oversight in respect of harbour authorities' functions.

One important duty, almost invariably incorporated in local legislation, is commonly called the "the open port duty". This provides that upon payment of ship, passenger and goods dues the harbour shall be open to all persons for the shipping and unshipping of goods, and the embarking and landing of passengers. Although these dues may be set as the authority sees fit, they are subject to a statutory right of objection under section 31 of the Harbours Act 1964 which gives the Secretary of State the power to direct an authority to review dues if, after proper consideration, he considers that they are unreasonable.

### DL Registrations

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many DL registrations remained unissued at 1 September 2001 in each of the following series *(a)* two letters, up to four digits, *(b)* three letters, up to three digits, *(c)* up to four digits, two letters, *(d)* up to three digits, three letters, *(e)* three letters, up to three digits, year suffix, and *(f)* year prefix, up to three digits, three letters. [7175]

**Mr. Jamieson:** Approximate numbers of vehicle registration marks in categories *(a)* to *(d)* are as follows:

*(a)* None remain
*(b)* None remain
*(c)* 9,940
*(d)* 20,000
*(e)* 355,000
*(f)* 388,000.

Exact figures cannot be provided as some marks have been allocated over the years, for instance to imported vehicles or those sold through the sale of marks scheme.

### Seller's Packs

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what proposals he has to reintroduce legislation requiring seller's packs to be produced by those selling houses. [7206]

**Ms Keeble:** Legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time allows. In the meantime we are pressing ahead, in consultation with consumer representatives and the professional bodies, with developing the detailed contents of the seller's pack.

### House Sales and Purchases

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to introduce to England elements of the Scottish system of house sales and purchases. [7284]

**Ms Keeble:** It is already open to sellers and buyers of homes in England to follow the Scottish arrangements if they wish. This does not require a change in the law. It is also worth noting that these arrangements are not mandatory in Scotland, but have become established by custom and practice.

Our consultation paper 'the key to easier home buying and selling', published in December 1998, discussed the Scottish arrangements. Most people responding on this issue agreed with the analysis that these arrangements have potential drawbacks and would not work well in more active housing markets in England and Wales.

### Refurbishment Projects

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by his Department in (i) the current year and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6593]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Central) is not carrying out any significant building projects in either financial year 2001–02 or 2002–03.

It is carrying out two maintenance projects valued at more than £1 million each where air conditioning chiller plant is being replaced. These are in the International Maritime Organisation building, and at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre.

Both projects are at a stage where commercial sensitivities militate against publication of the precise values of these projects.

## Transport Projects

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the location and cost of transport projects over £1 million was in each region and nation of the United Kingdom which has received Government funding *(a)* in whole and *(b)* in part and (i) are being constructed and (ii) have been constructed under (A) PPP and (B) PFI; and if he will make a statement. [6951]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The following table provides details of the PFI and PPP transport projects valued at over £1 million in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and states whether the projects have completed their construction phase, or are under construction, and whether they have received Government funding.

*Government funding of PFI and PPP projects in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*

| *Name of Project* | *Location* | *Cost (£ million)* | *Government funding?* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *PFI transport projects in England (constructed)* | | | |
| Highways Agency A69 | North East and North West | 9 | No (PFI) |
| Highways Agency A50 | East Midlands and West Midlands | 21 | No (PFI) |
| Highways Agency A19 | North East and Yorkshire and Humber | 29 | No (PFI) |
| Highways Agency A417/419 | South West | 49 | No (PFI) |
| Highways Agency M40 | South East and West Midlands | 65 | No (PFI) |
| Highways Agency A30/35 | South West | 75 | No (PFI) |
| Highways Agency A1(M) | Eastern | 128 | No (PFI) |
| Highways Agency M1/A1 | Yorkshire and Humber | 214 | No (PFI) |
| London Underground Northern Line Trains | London | 409 | No (PFI) |
| *PFI transport projects in England (under construction)* | | | |
| Highways Agency Birmingham Northern Relief Road | West Midlands | 485 | No (Concession) |
| Brent street lighting | London | 8 | [1]Yes |
| Doncaster Interchange | Yorkshire and Humber | 26.2 | [1]Yes |
| Vehicle Inspectorate MOT Computerisation | UK | 31 | No (PFI) |
| A130 (A12-A127) | Eastern | 90 | [1]Yes |
| Nottingham Express Transit | East Midlands | 140 | [1]Yes |
| London Underground British Transport Police | London | 13 | No (PFI) |
| London Underground Connect | London | 355 | No (PFI) |
| London Underground Power | London | 108 | No (PFI) |
| London Transport Prestige | London | 137 | No (PFI) |
| *PPP transport projects in England (constructed)* | | | |
| Highways Agency Second Severn Crossing | South West | 331 | No (concession) |
| Highways Agency Queen Elizabeth II Bridge (Dartford River Crossing) | South East | 180 | No (concession) |
| Midland Metro | West Midlands | 145 | Yes (capital grant) |
| Docklands Light Railway Extension to Lewisham | London | 202 | Yes (capital grant) |
| Croydon Tramlink | London | 205 | Yes (capital grant) |
| Manchester Metrolink Extension to Salford Quays and Eccles | North West | 160 | Yes (capital grant) |
| *PPP transport projects in England (under construction)* | | | |
| Channel Tunnel Rail Link | South East | 4,178 | Yes (capital grant) |
| *PFI transport projects in Wales (constructed)* | | | |
| A55 | — | 100 | No (PFI) |
| *PFI transport projects in Wales (under construction)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |
| *PPP transport projects in Wales (constructed)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |
| *PPP transport projects in Wales (under construction)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |
| *PFI transport projects in Scotland (constructed)* | | | |
| Skye Bridge | — | 23.6 | [2]Yes |
| M6 DBFO | — | 96 | No (PFI) |
| Inverness Airport Terminal—Highlands and Islands | — | 9.5 | No (PFI) |
| *PFI transport projects in Scotland (under construction)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |
| *PPP transport projects in Scotland (constructed)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |
| *PPP transport projects in Scotland (under construction)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |

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*Government funding of PFI and PPP projects in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*

| *Name of Project* | *Location* | *Cost (£ million)* | *Government funding?* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *PFI transport projects in Northern Ireland (constructed)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |
| *PFI transport projects in Northern Ireland (under construction)* | | | |
| DVTA Vehicle Testing Project | — | 11 | No (PFI) |
| *PPP transport projects in Northern Ireland (constructed)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |
| *PPP transport projects in Northern Ireland (under construction)* | | | |
| N/a | — | — | — |

[1] Local authority PFI attracting additional revenue support
[2] Although a concession, Government grant was payable to funding the construction of approach roads.
*Note:*
For the purposes of this table the cost of a project is deemed to be its capital value

## Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will estimate the total running costs for buildings used, owned or rented by his Department for each nation and region of the UK, and estimate the average cost per square metre for properties used by his Department as a whole, and by region and nation of the UK. [6801]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The total running costs for the buildings used, owned, or rented by DTLR, including the Government Office Estate, is £103.6 million per annum. We do not hold this figure at regional or national level.

The average cost per square metre for properties across the Department is £292. The average figures for the nine English regions and Scotland and Wales are listed in the table.

£

| *Region* | *Cost per m²* |
|---|---|
| East Midlands | 210 |
| East of England | 210 |
| Greater London | 470 |
| North East | 210 |
| North West | 125 |
| South East | 275 |
| South West | 305 |
| West Midlands | 270 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 160 |
| Scotland | 260 |
| Wales | [1]70 |

[1] This figure is distorted because DVLC Swansea is a freehold. No notional rent is included because this information is not available. The figure for Wales excluding the DVLC is £152 per square metre.
*Note:*
1. The information and analysis provided is for the DTLR's 135 key properties, i.e. those buildings over 350 $m^2$. These properties account for 76 per cent. of the total running costs of the Estate, 95 per cent. of the staff and 74% of floor area of the total property portfolio.
2. The costs are as provided by DTLR and its agencies under the headings: Rent, Rates, Service Charge, Utilities, All Maintenance, and Additional running costs.

## London Weighting

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will estimate the total value of London Weightings and London living allowances for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [6800]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions consists of a Central Department and 10 Executive Agencies. The Central Department and seven of the Agencies do not pay a London Weighting Allowance. Where this had been paid previously it has been consolidated into basic salaries. Three of the Agencies continue to pay a London Weighting allowance:

Vehicle Inspectorate: £2,300.

Driving Standards Agency has three rates: £736 for outer London areas, £1,015 for intermediate London areas and £1,776 for the Inner London Area.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency also has three rates: £805 for outer London areas, £1,015 for intermediate London areas and £1,715 for the Inner London Area.

## Housing Debt

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) if he will list those local authorities which have applied to HM Treasury for moneys to pay off overhanging housing debt; and if he will list those local authorities which *(a)* have received such moneys since May 1997 and *(b)* will receive such moneys pending residents' voting in favour of housing stock transfers; [7739]

(2) if he will list the criteria used to determine the order of preference in which local authorities which have applied to HM Treasury for moneys to pay off overhanging housing debt receive such moneys. [7747]

**Ms Keeble:** A stock transfer proposal from a local authority with overhanging housing debt is required to meet the same criteria as other applicant authorities in order to obtain a place on the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) Programme and, if tenants support the proposal, the Secretary of State's consent to transfer. The receipt from the transfer must be sufficient to meet the premium payable to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) for early repayment of the authority's PWLB debt.

To date, four one-off payments have been made by the Exchequer to meet overhanging housing debt. In 1999–2000 a payment was made to Burnley borough council. In 2000–01 payments were made to Coventry city council, Calderdale borough council and Blackburn with Darwen borough council.

Six local authorities on the 2001–02 transfer programme (Bradford city council, Carlisle city council, Dudley metropolitan borough council, Knowsley metropolitan borough council, St. Helens metropolitan borough council and Walsall metropolitan borough council) will potentially require a one-off payment to meet their overhanging housing debt. I have held open a place on the 2001–02 Programme for Birmingham city council, subject to agreeing its stock valuation. If Birmingham is accepted onto the programme, it too will require a one-off payment from the Department.

To date, all proposals meeting the Secretary of State's criteria and gaining the support of a majority of tenants have been granted consent to transfer. It has not been necessary to prioritise transfer applications.

### Second Home Owners

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will estimate the total revenue which would be raised by local authorities as a result of a change in law requiring second home owners to pay the full council tax at current levels, broken down by local authority area. [6362]

**Dr. Whitehead:** Second home owners are presently entitled to a 50 per cent. council tax discount. If all had been required to pay the full council tax in 2001–02, we estimate that an additional amount of approximately £80 million would have been raised. Accurate figures for individual local authority areas are not available.

In the Rural White Paper, we said that we would consult on giving local authorities discretion to remove or reduce the 50 per cent. council tax discount for second home owners. We will also consult on giving local authorities discretion to remove or reduce the 50 per cent. discount for long-term empty properties.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Prisoner Deaths

**Mr. Stinchcombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners *(a)* committed suicide, and *(b)* died in custody in 2000–01. [4843]

**Beverley Hughes:** The figures requested are given in the table:

*Table showing the number of deaths that occurred in prison establishments in England and Wales for the financial year 2000–01*

| Financial Year | Self inflicted deaths[1] | Natural causes deaths | Homicides |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2000–01 | 76 | 60 | 2 |

[1] The term "self-inflicted deaths" includes not only those deaths which resulted in a verdict of "suicide" at the Coroner's Inquest, but also those deaths where it appears that the person's own actions caused his/her death. Such deaths might result in a verdict of "open" or "misadventure" at the Inquest if, for example, there was doubt about the person's intent to take his/her life.

Comparable figures for 1999–2000 were 91 self-inflicted deaths, 54 natural causes and one homicide.

The Prison Service undertook a review of suicide prevention procedures last year and subsequently announced a new proactive strategy to reduce suicides in Prison. The strategy is overseen by a Working Group which I chair.

### Prisons

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the total expenditure was on education in prisons in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; what was the real terms change in each year; what was the total amount per prisoner based on average prison population figures in each year; and if he will make a statement. [5117]

**Beverley Hughes** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The information in the table is available for certain identifiable areas of education expenditure, covering payments to education and library service providers and purchase of education materials. It does not include the private sector managed prisons. The cost per prisoner calculation excludes the average population figures for those prisons.

It should be noted that due to changes in the way expenditure has been recorded the figures for 1999–2000 and 2000–01 include VAT payments, where applicable, but do not include refunds to prisons of any recoverable VAT, details of which are not readily available, whereas the figures for the preceding three years do include such refunds.

*Expenditure on education 1991–92 to 2000–01*

| Year | Actual spend (£) | At 2000–01 prices (£) | Percentage change | [1]Average population | [1]Average cost per head at 2000–01 prices (£) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1991–92 | 29,372,748 | 36,951,501 | — | 45,162 | 818 |
| 1992–93 | 31,227,172 | 38,042,946 | 2.95 | 43,705 | 870 |
| 1993–94 | 31,089,033 | 36,896,112 | –3.01 | 45,106 | 818 |
| 1994–95 | 36,756,960 | 43,017,262 | 16.59 | 47,784 | 900 |
| 1995–96 | 36,956,087 | 42,041,895 | –2.27 | 49,574 | 848 |
| 1996–97 | 34,507,378 | 38,032,622 | –9.54 | 54,359 | 700 |
| 1997–98 | 36,174,320 | 38,770,385 | 1.94 | 60,739 | 638 |
| 1998–99 | 39,049,875 | 40,690,517 | 4.95 | 60,751 | 670 |
| 1999–2000[2] | 47,445,945 | 48,338,269 | 18.79 | 59,857 | 808 |
| 2000–01[2] | 50,890,134 | 50,890,134 | 5.28 | 59,044 | 862 |

[1] Excluding privately operated prisons

[2] Due to changes in the recording of expenditure the figures are not all on a like for like basis. Those for 1996–97, 1997–98 and 1998–99 are net of recoverable VAT, where applicable. Whereas those for previous years and those for 1999–2000 and 2000–01 are gross expenditure with no reduction for VAT refunds.

### Prisoners' Conditions

**Mr. Stinchcombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average time out of cell was for prisoners in 2000–01. [4846]

**Beverley Hughes:** The average weekday time out of cell for prisoners during the year 2000–01 was 10 hours.

**Mrs. Brinton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of *(a)* the adequacy and *(b)* the equal availability of education and training facilities for inmates in Her Majesty's prisons. [6204]

**Beverley Hughes:** The Government have put additional resources into education and training in prisons. Direct expenditure on education and library provision alone currently stands at over £55 million for all prisoners including juveniles, and is set to increase to around £70 million by 2003–04. The Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit, based at the Department for Education and Skills, has been established to advise on how to fulfil the Government's policy to bring about dramatic improvements in the quality and quantity of prison education and training. It will be looking, among other things, at how to ensure equality of access to high-quality provision across the prison estate.

### Asylum Detainees

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are being held in detention in England and Wales pending the hearing of their asylum appeal; and if he will make a statement. [2525]

**Angela Eagle:** The latest available information on the number of asylum seekers detained under Immigration Act powers relates to 30 June 2001. As of that date, 1,205 males and 30 females (to the nearest five) were being held in detention in England and Wales under Immigration Act powers who are recorded as having claimed asylum at some point. These figures include persons held in immigration detention centres and Prison Service establishments, some of whom are detained under dual immigration and other powers, and exclude the Oakington reception centre, for which gender information is not available.

Information on which of these are pending the hearing of their asylum appeal is not available and could be obtained only by examining individual case files at disproportionate cost.

### Oakington Reception Centre

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of asylum applications sent to Oakington reception centre who have a negative initial decision, have had that decision overturned on appeal; and if he will make a statement. [1510]

**Angela Eagle** *[holding answer 5 July 2001]:* On the basis of provisional Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) data up to 23 September, 5 per cent. of all those applicants sent to Oakington reception centre, who have had an appeal determined, have had their initial decision overturned by adjudicators of the Immigration Appellate Authority.

### Kosovo

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has had with the Department for International Development on policies to support the rural economy in Kosovo to help reduce the pressure of economic migration to *(a)* the UK and *(b)* other countries in the European Union. [5283]

**Angela Eagle:** Our Departments have engaged in extensive discussion on all aspects of the Kosovo crisis. In 1999–2000 the United Kingdom committed £110 million to humanitarian assistance, including support to Kosovan refugees in neighbouring countries. In January 2000 it was agreed the UK would commit a further £5 million a year to a longer-term programme of technical assistance, including mine clearance and improvements to community infrastructure. We also participate in the work of the European Commission, which focuses on helping to restart the rural community, including by providing agricultural inputs and audits for farmers and other rural workers.

The aim of the Government's engagement in the Balkans is to promote peace and stability and alleviate poverty in the region. Providing stability and economic opportunities for the people of Kosovo is an essential pre-requisite to reducing emigration pressures.

### Cleansing Tablets (Prisons)

**Mr. Borrow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the evaluation of the pilot project into the provision of cleansing tablets in prisons to reduce transmission of HIV and hepatitis viruses will be made available; [5529]

(2) when the pilot project on the provision of cleansing tablets in prisons to reduce transmission of HIV and hepatitis viruses will be expanded throughout the country. [5527]

**Beverley Hughes:** The pilot project run by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine has finished. The Prison Service is about to report on the findings and I shall write to my hon. Friend when I have considered the recommendations.

### Condoms

**Mr. Borrow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will list the prisons in England and Wales that distributed condoms to inmates in the last year for which figures are available. [5526]

**Beverley Hughes:** This information is not currently collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Special Constables

**Mr. Cameron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many special constables were recruited in the Thames Valley force; and how many special constables left the force, in each year from 1996 to 2000. [5759]

**Mr. Denham:** The recruitment and wastage figures for Thames Valley Special Constabulary for the period 30 September 1996 to 30 September 2000 are set out in the tables.

| Year | Recruitment | Wastage |
|---|---|---|
| 1996 | 185 | 168 |
| 1997 | 173 | 220 |
| 1998 | 74 | 122 |
| 1999 | 65 | 101 |
| 2000 | 46 | 114 |

*Source:*
Statistics provided by Research, Development and Statistics Department

The Government are committed to increasing the special constabulary and we are looking carefully at radical improvements in their management, welfare and deployment as part of the police reform process.

**Ross Cranston:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what roles are performed by special constables in the West Midlands Police Force. [7087]

**Mr. Denham:** Special constables perform a variety of duties in the West Midlands Police Force. These include high-visibility foot patrol, supporting regular officers at public events, crime prevention initiatives and traffic-related duties. Specials also perform driving duties, following up inquiries and attending to non-urgent call-outs.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the PFI contracts entered into since 1997, indicating *(a)* the value of the PFI, *(b)* the name of the successful contractor, *(c)* those PFIs which have benefited from refinancing arrangements, *(d)* the value of the benefit accrued to the company concerned and *(e)* the extent of the clawback. [4532]

**Mr. Blunkett:** From the best information available, I list the details requested.

| Title | (a) Value £ (exc. VAT) | (b) Name of successful contractor | (c) Benefited from refinancing? | (d) Value of benefit accrued to company aconcerned | (e) Extent of clawback |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IT2000 (Sirius) | 360 million | ICL Alcedo Ltd. (Prime Contractor ICL UK Ltd.—key sub-contractors: PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Global Crossing | No | n/a | n/a |
| Criminal Record Bureau | 400 million | Capita | No | n/a | n/a |
| Passport Application Support System—Front End | 100 million | Siemens Business Services | No | n/a | n/a |
| Passport Application Support System—Back End | 300 million | Security Printing and Systems Ltd. | No | n/a | n/a |
| Medway Secure Training Centre (STC) | 48.5 million | Rebound ECD Ltd. (Group 4 and Tarmac (now Carilion)) | No | n/a | n/a |
| Rainsbrook STC | 43.6 million | Rebound ECD Ltd. | No | n/a | n/a |
| Hassockfield STC | 48.2 million | Medomsley Training Services Ltd. (Premier Prison Services and Kvaerner Construction) | No | n/a | n/a |
| Airwave | 2.5 billion | BT | No | n/a | n/a |
| Quantum—Prison Service IT and telecommunication services | 200 million | EDS | No | n/a | n/a |
| HMYOI Ashfield | 121 million | Pucklechurch Custodial Services Ltd. | No | n/a | n/a |
| HMP Forest Bank | 197 million | Agecroft Prison Management Ltd. | No | n/a | n/a |
| HMP Rye Hill | 154 million | Onley Prison Services Ltd. | No | n/a | n/a |
| HMP Dovergate | 240 million | Moreton Prison Services Ltd. | No | n/a | n/a |
| *Heat Energy Services at:* | 7 million | Energy Services (UK) Ltd. | No | n/a | n/a |
| HMP Blundeston | 7 million | | | | |
| HMP Camp Hill | 6 million | | | | |
| HMP Chelmsford | 10 million | | | | |
| HMP Dartmoor | 8 million | | | | |
| HMYOI Deerbolt | 6 million | | | | |
| HMP Lewes | 8 million | | | | |
| HMP Parkhurst | 2 million | | | | |
| HMP Usk/Prescoed | — | | | | |
| Total | 4,766.3 million | | | | |

**Mr. Laws:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the Private Finance Initiative; and if he will make a statement. [5733]

**Mr. Blunkett** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* Information on the detailed operation of individual contracts is not held centrally and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

### Life Sentence Prisoners

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many life sentence prisoners are being held in prisons in England *(a)* whose last place of residence before sentence was in Wales or *(b)* who have requested a transfer to prison in Wales; [5200]

(2) are being held in prisons in Wales *(a)* whose last place of residence before sentence was in England and *(b)* who have requested a transfer to prison in England; [5201]

(3) how many life sentence prisoners are *(a)* held in prisons in England who were sentenced in Wales and *(b)* held in prisons in Wales who were sentenced in England; [5199]

(4) how many life sentence prisoners are held in prisons in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales. [5198]

**Beverley Hughes** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Provisional information shows that on 31 August 2001 there were 30 life sentence prisoners in prisons in Wales, and 4,925 in prisons in England. Of the 30 in prisons in Wales, provisional information shows that 21 were committed at courts in England, and of those in prisons in England 193 were committed in courts in Wales.

There are no data held centrally of the last place of residence for a prisoner before they were sent to prison in England and Wales. Offenders tend to be sentenced in a court nearest to their place of residence so the numbers give an approximation of whether the last place of residence was in England or Wales. Data on requests for transfers are not held centrally by the Prison Service.

### Animal Experiments

**Linda Perham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to modify the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 following developments in genetic modification; [2559]

(2) what guidance has been issued on the assessment of applications to produce animals by nuclear transfer cloning under the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986; [2561]

(3) what plans the Government have to consult on the banning of genetic modification of non-human primates. [2560]

**Angela Eagle:** We have no current plans to modify the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 following developments in genetic modification. The Act provides that all use of the animals covered by its licensing controls must be justified, and that consequent animal suffering should be minimised. The terms of the Act are sufficiently broad and flexible to take account of scientific developments, without compromising the protection it affords to the animals concerned.

No specific guidance has been issued on the assessment of applications under the 1986 Act to produce animals by nuclear transfer cloning, though general guidance to applicants applies as much to this area of scientific research as to any other. All such applications are however considered at a central point within the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate. This ensures consistency of approach and identifies any cases that may need to be drawn to the attention of Ministers, who may seek further advice as required from the Animal Procedures Committee (APC), external assessors and others.

We have no plans at present for consultation on the subject of genetic modification of non-human primates. No applications to conduct such work have so far been made under the 1986 Act—either to produce such animals in the United Kingdom or to use such animals imported from elsewhere. Any applications would be considered in the light of advice from the Inspectorate and the APC.

### HMP Swansea

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost of and timetable for the planned programme of capital works are at HMP Swansea; when it will be completed; and what plans exist to bring the remainder of the prison buildings back into prison service use. [5202]

**Beverley Hughes** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The only capital project currently under way at Her Majesty's Prison Swansea is the replacement of the central heating boilers. The expected cost of this project is £1,040,000 and it is expected to be completed in November 2001. This work has not involved loss of accommodation.

Capital works in A Wing to remove asbestos, renew the heating system and install in-cell electricity at a total cost of £520,000 have been completed during September 2001 and the accommodation is being brought back into use in a phased programme to be completed by mid-October.

Twenty-five work places in Workshop 3 have been temporarily closed for a six-week period for essential electrical maintenance.

Most of B Wing remains out of use. There are no plans to return this accommodation to use. B Wing is a listed building and, as a result of the conditions required by CADW/Welsh Historic Monuments, the cost of the works needed to bring it up to current standards, including in-cell sanitation, mean it is not viable to restore it.

A capital project to the value of £147,000 has been authorised in the health care centre to provide improved cells and a lift for disabled prisoners. The contract for this work has not yet been let and there is therefore no definite timetable for it. It will not involve taking prisoner accommodation out of use.

It is also expected that various roofing repairs will take place at Swansea in the current financial year. The details have not yet been finalised. This is also not expected to involve the loss of accommodation.

### Private Prisons

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions private prison operators have been *(a)* fined and *(b)* had payments withheld for breaking contract conditions; if he will provide details of each default notice issued, indicating the dates and amounts concerned; and if he will make a statement. [5106]

**Beverley Hughes** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The contractors running privately managed prisons are financially penalised in the form of deductions from the fee payable to them by the Prison Service. There have been 36 occasions on which deductions have been made; these are listed in the tables for each of the five prisons which have incurred deductions, together with the amounts, reasons and dates. The five remaining privately managed prisons have not incurred deductions: Ashfield, Doncaster, Dovegate, Forest Bank and Rye Hill prisons. Buckley Hall prison transferred to Prison Service management on 26 June 2000; a fine of £526 was deducted in February 1997 for performance points while under private management.

| Number of occasions | Penalty: £ | Reasons: PP = performance points | Dates |
|---|---|---|---|
| *HMP Altcourse* | | | |
| 1 | 2,368.50 | PP's for Qtr 2 | September 1998 |
| 2 | 195,000 | PP's and Doubling Qtrs 2,3 and 4 | November 1998 |
| 3 | 4,144.97 | PP's for Qtr 3 | December 1998 |
| 4 | 3,954.04 | PP's for Qtr 4 | March 1999 |
| 5 | 3,511.23 | PP's for Qtr 1 | June 1999 |
| 6 | 3,304.27 | PP's for Qtr 2 | September 1999 |
| 7 | 440.40 | PP's for Qtr 3 | December 1999 |
| 8 | 108,039.25 | PP's for Qtr 4 | February 2000 |
| 9 | 4.82 | PP's for Qtr 4 | March 2000 |
| 10 | 34,061.74 | PP's for Qtr 1 | May 2000 |
| 11 | 9.77 | PP's for Qtr 1 | June 2000 |
| *HMP Blakehurst* | | | |
| 1 | 25,000 | Escape | November 1998 |
| *HMP Lowdham Grange* | | | |
| 1 | 702.00 | PP's for Qtr 1 | June 1998 |
| 2 | 45,080.00 | PP's for Qtr 2 | August 1998 |
| 3 | 31,231.00 | PP's for Qtr 3 | November 1998 |
| 4 | 6,334.00 | PP's for Qtr 4 | February 1999 |
| 5 | 11,865.00 | PP's for Qtr 4 | February 2000 |
| 6 | 5,703.00 | PP's for Qtr 1 | May 2001 |
| *HMP Parc* | | | |
| 1 | 54,782 | Performance points | March 1998 |
| 2 | 1,308.56 | PP's for Qtr 1 | July 1998 |
| 3 | 298.09 | Doubling | June 1998 |
| 4 | 750,000.00 | PP's for Qtr 3 + doubling | November 1998 |
| 5 | 7,520.17 | PP's for Qtr 1 doubling | May 1999 |
| 6 | 80,390.38 | Doubling Qtr 2 | August 1999 |
| 7 | 2,296.94 | Doubling Qtr 2 | September 1999 |
| 8 | 109,329.27 | Doubling Qtr 3 | November 1999 |
| 9 | 601.77 | Doubling Qtr 4 | January 2000 |
| 10 | 7,708.10 | PP's for Qtr 1 | April 2000 |
| 11 | 5,401.68 | PP's for Qtr 2 | July 2000 |
| 12 | 3,448.07 | PP's for Qtr 3 | October 2000 |
| 13 | 59.22 | PP's for Qtr 4 | January 2001 |
| *HMP Wolds* | | | |
| 1 | 3,607.50 | PP's Qtr 3 | October 1999 |
| 2 | 10,432.50 | PP's Qtr 4 | January 2000 |
| 3 | 15,353.00 | PP's Qtr 2 | July 2000 |
| 4 | 9,782.50 | PP's Qtr 3 | October 2000 |
| 5 | 4,680.00 | PP's Qtr 4 | January 2000 |

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the basis is on which financial penalties imposed on contractors of privately managed prisons are calculated; and if he will make a statement. [5105]

**Beverley Hughes** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* There are three ways in which contractors can incur financial penalties. The contracts for privately managed prisons require the contractor to operate to a range of standards measuring the performance of the prison. Failure to reach any of these standards results in the accumulation of penalty points; the number of points incurred depends on the seriousness of the failure. If these accumulated penalty points exceed a specified threshold, financial penalties are imposed by means of deductions from the fee payable to the contractor. There is an upper limit to the level of financial penalties that can be imposed. In some contracts an escape attracts a fixed fine.

Additionally contractors can be penalised for unauthorised overcrowding, if the contractor holds more than a specified number of prisoners in a cell, and for unavailable places, the criteria for which include levels of security, control of prisoners and physical requirements such as lighting and heating.

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many former Home Office officials and Prison Service staff have taken paid employment with private companies involved in the operation, management and building of private prisons in each of the last 10 years; how many of those employees were formerly responsible for overseeing, managing and inspecting contracts for private prisons; and if he will make a statement. [5103]

**Beverley Hughes** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* There is no contractual requirement for companies to record the information requested. Such information as has been recorded could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

## National Address Database

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Government are making

to create a single national address database; what the expected timescale is for the implementation of this project; and what its purpose is. [4942]

**Angela Eagle** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* There are no current plans to establish such a database.

### Police (Child Protection)

**Mr. Stinchcombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what key performance indicators have been set by or for the police in respect of child protection. [5410]

**Mr. Denham:** There are currently no specific best value performance indicators set for the police in respect of child protection. It is open to police authorities to set local performance indicators, in addition to those set centrally, if they wish.

### Prison Service

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the rates of sickness absence in the Prison Service were in each of the last four years. [5503]

**Beverley Hughes:** The annual sickness absence rates per member of staff since January 1999 are shown in the table. Sickness absence data prior to January 1999 are not available.

| | *Working days lost* | *Annualised rate of sickness absence* |
|---|---|---|
| 1999 | 537,269 | 12.56 |
| 2000 | 588,078 | 13.43 |
| 2001[1] | 407,611 | 13.93 |

[1] January to August

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the revenue expenditure was per prisoner of the Prison Service *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the southern area and *(c)* for Isle of Wight prisons for each year since 1997, expressed (i) in cash terms and (ii) as a percentage of 1997 expenditure. [7183]

**Beverley Hughes:** The cost per prisoner of the Prison Service *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the southern area and *(c)* for the Isle of Wight (IoW) for each year since 1997 expressed in (i) cash terms and (ii) as a percentage of 1997 expenditure is set out in the table.

| | *1997–98* | *1998–99* | *1999–2000* | *2000–01* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| National cost per prisoner (£ cash) | 18,696 | 20,502 | 21,932 | 23,292 |
| Southern area (£ cash) | 20,612 | 20,091 | 21,204 | 21,915 |
| Southern area as a percentage of 1997 expenditure | 6.6 | 6.9 | 7.3 | 7.5 |
| IoW prisons (£ cash) | 21,520 | 21,355 | 21,872 | 21,886 |
| IoW prisons as a percentage of 1997 expenditure | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.5 |

Southern area data have been derived by summing the 10 establishments in the Prison Service area Thames Valley and Hampshire. The prisons on the Isle of Wight are Albany, Camp Hill and Parkhurst. The national cost per prisoner does not include headquarters overheads and is therefore not comparable to the Prison Service cost per prisoner key performance indicator. Data on expenditure, population and other key performance indicators are published in the Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the capital budget was of HM Prison Service *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the southern area and *(c)* for Isle of Wight prisons, for each year since 1997 (i) in cash terms and (ii) as a percentage of 1997 budgets. [7182]

**Beverley Hughes:** The table shows actual expenditure on capital for the years 1997–98 to 2000–01 for the Prison Service, for the Thames Valley, Hampshire and Isle of Wight area and for the three Isle of Wight prisons: Albany, Camp Hill and Parkhurst. For comparison purposes the figures have been converted to 1997–98 prices.

The Isle of Wight prisons fall within the Thames Valley, Hampshire and Isle of Wight area. This area has been in existence only since April 2000 when the area structure of the Prison Service was revised to bring it into line with other criminal justice agencies. The area figures for earlier years have been adjusted so that they cover the same group of prisons. The figures for the Thames Valley, Hampshire and Isle of Wight area and for the three Isle of Wight prisons cover only capital spend incurred locally; they do not include any major capital projects which would have been funded centrally by Construction Unit in Prison Service headquarters.

*Gross capital expenditure (£000)*

| | *Prison Service* | *Thames Valley, Hampshire and IOW* | *Albany* | *Camp Hill* | *Parkhurst* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1997–98 spend | 284,056 | 1,646 | 196 | 183 | 82 |
| 1998–99 spend | 218,894 | 1,688 | 63 | 105 | 186 |
| 1998–99 at 1997–98 prices | 212,942 | 1,642 | 61 | 102 | 181 |
| 1998–99 at 1997–98 prices as % of 1997–98 | 75 | 100 | 31 | 56 | 221 |
| 1999–2000 spend | 165,525 | 2,029 | 193 | 165 | 169 |
| 1999–2000 at 1997–98 prices | 157,083 | 1,196 | 184 | 156 | 160 |

*Gross capital expenditure (£000)*

| | Prison Service | Thames Valley, Hampshire and IOW | Albany | Camp Hill | Parkhurst |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1999–2000 at 1997–98 prices as % of 1997–98 | 55 | 117 | 94 | 85 | 196 |
| 2000–01 | 147,652 | 642 | 96 | 103 | 38 |
| 2000–01 at 1997–98 prices | 137,711 | 599 | 90 | 96 | 35 |
| 2000–01 at 1997–98 prices as % of 1997–98 | 48 | 36 | 46 | 53 | 43 |

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the management of the Prison Service facilities for juveniles and young adults. [6376]

**Beverley Hughes:** From April 2000, the Youth Justice Board took responsibility for commissioning and purchasing all secure accommodation including Prison Service accommodation for children and young persons sentenced to custody.

The creation of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales sees for the first time a single organisation with oversight and responsibility for the care and well-being of 10 to 17-year-old offenders. The board's purpose is to monitor the operation of the youth justice system, to identify and promote good practice and to advise the Home Secretary how to deliver the statutory aim of preventing offending by children and young people. The board is also responsible for commissioning services for young offenders in secure facilities.

In response to these changes the Prison Service has created a new distinct estate for 15 to 17-year-old boys, comprising both designated juvenile units in young offender institutions. For the first time, the vast majority of under-18s are held in dedicated under-18 establishments, or in dedicated under-18 living units within other establishments.

As part of the Juvenile Estate three special units have been opened at Castington, Huntercombe and Hollesley Bay offering enhanced regimes for the more vulnerable boys who have been convicted of serious offences and have been given longer sentences under section 90 or 91 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 (formerly section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933).

Improvements are being made to the quality of accommodation, the level of care and to regime standards. The new regimes are underpinned by a Prison Service Order (PSO 4950), which defines the principles upon which governors must build and operate regimes.

From 1 April 2001, a new Operational Manager (Assistant Director, Juveniles) has taken direct responsibility within the Prison Service for the operational management of four establishments holding juveniles (Ashfield, Huntercombe, Werrington and Wetherby) and for the regimes and performance of the juvenile side of young offender institutions holding both juveniles and young offenders.

There is a manifesto commitment to build on the Government's youth justice reforms to improve the standard of custodial accommodation and offending programmes for 18 to 20-year-olds. I am currently considering with others what is needed for young adult offenders and how best to deliver it.

## Prison Staff

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed on governor grades as a percentage of the total number of prison officers in each prison. [5504]

**Beverley Hughes:** The number of staff employed on governor grades as a percentage of the total number of prison officers in each prison is shown in the table.

*Senior operational managers (previously governor grades) as a percentage of prison officer grades as at 31 August 2001*

| Establishment | Senior operational managers | Officer grades | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Acklington | 8 | 209 | 3.83 |
| Albany | 7 | 143 | 4.90 |
| Ashwell | 5 | 101 | 4.95 |
| Askham Grange | 3 | 28 | 10.71 |
| Aylesbury | 11 | 175 | 6.29 |
| Bedford | 5 | 151 | 3.31 |
| Belmarsh | 12 | 520 | 2.31 |
| Birmingham | 10 | 305 | 3.28 |
| Blakenhurst | 8 | 152 | 5.26 |
| Blantyre House | 2 | 35 | 5.71 |
| Blundeston | 5 | 158 | 3.16 |
| Brinsford | 9 | 214 | 4.21 |
| Bristol | 9 | 297 | 3.03 |
| Brixton | 8 | 269 | 2.97 |
| Brockhill | 4 | 89 | 4.49 |
| Buckley Hall | 4 | 105 | 3.81 |
| Bullingdon | 10 | 249 | 4.02 |
| Bullwood Hall | 5 | 73 | 6.85 |
| Camp Hill | 6 | 148 | 4.05 |
| Canterbury | 4 | 119 | 3.36 |
| Cardiff | 9 | 228 | 3.95 |
| Castington | 7 | 209 | 3.35 |
| Channings Wood | 8 | 148 | 5.41 |
| Chelmsford | 7 | 202 | 3.47 |
| Coldingly | 4 | 93 | 4.30 |
| Cookham Wood | 3 | 53 | 5.66 |
| Dartmoor | 10 | 232 | 4.31 |
| Deerbolt | 6 | 143 | 4.20 |
| Dorchester | 5 | 83 | 6.02 |
| Dover | 5 | 113 | 4.42 |
| Downview | 5 | 113 | 4.42 |
| Drake Hall | 4 | 65 | 6.15 |
| Durham | 13 | 419 | 3.10 |
| East Sutton Park | 2 | 25 | 8.00 |
| Eastwood Park | 4 | 111 | 3.60 |
| Elmley | 8 | 271 | 2.95 |
| Erlestoke | 5 | 99 | 5.05 |
| Everthorpe | 5 | 125 | 4.00 |
| Exeter | 7 | 179 | 3.91 |
| Featherstone | 7 | 144 | 4.86 |
| Feltham | 15 | 370 | 4.05 |
| Ford | 4 | 59 | 6.78 |
| Foston Hall | 5 | 76 | 6.58 |
| Frankland | 13 | 483 | 2.69 |
| Full Sutton | 15 | 480 | 3.13 |
| Garth | 10 | 247 | 4.05 |

*Senior operational managers (previously governor grades) as a percentage of prison officer grades as at 31 August 2001*

| Establishment | Senior operational managers | Officer grades | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gartree | 8 | 147 | 5.44 |
| Glen Parva | 12 | 275 | 4.36 |
| Gloucester | 5 | 121 | 4.13 |
| Grendon | 8 | 173 | 4.62 |
| Guys Marsh | 5 | 123 | 4.07 |
| Haslar | 3 | 45 | 6.67 |
| Hatfield | 4 | 40 | 10.00 |
| Haverigg | 6 | 130 | 4.62 |
| Hewell Grange | 4 | 30 | 13.33 |
| Highdown | 10 | 280 | 3.57 |
| Highpoint | 9 | 147 | 6.12 |
| Highpoint North | 4 | 85 | 4.71 |
| Hindley | 11 | 221 | 4.98 |
| Hollesley Bay | 7 | 152 | 4.61 |
| Holloway | 11 | 271 | 4.06 |
| Holme House | 9 | 301 | 2.99 |
| Hull | 9 | 244 | 3.69 |
| Huntercombe | 5 | 153 | 3.27 |
| Kingston | 4 | 74 | 5.41 |
| Kirkham | 6 | 84 | 7.14 |
| Kirklevington | 3 | 37 | 8.11 |
| Lancaster | 4 | 89 | 4.49 |
| Lancaster Farms | 8 | 198 | 4.04 |
| Latchmere House | 3 | 38 | 7.89 |
| Leeds | 10 | 416 | 2.40 |
| Leicester | 6 | 144 | 4.17 |
| Lewes | 6 | 179 | 3.35 |
| Leyhill | 7 | 65 | 10.77 |
| Lincoln | 5 | 225 | 2.22 |
| Lindholme | 9 | 175 | 5.14 |
| Littlehey | 6 | 161 | 3.73 |
| Liverpool | 9 | 541 | 1.66 |
| Long Lartin | 13 | 396 | 3.28 |
| Low Newton | 6 | 121 | 4.96 |
| Maidstone | 9 | 185 | 4.86 |
| Manchester | 16 | 462 | 3.46 |
| Moorland | 6 | 273 | 2.20 |
| Morton Hall | 3 | 68 | 4.41 |
| New Hall | 6 | 141 | 4.26 |
| North Sea Camp | 4 | 35 | 11.43 |
| Northallerton | 5 | 79 | 6.33 |
| Norwich | 9 | 234 | 3.85 |
| Nottingham | 9 | 177 | 5.08 |
| Onley | 9 | 230 | 3.91 |
| Parkhurst | 9 | 198 | 4.55 |
| Pentonville | 13 | 368 | 3.53 |
| Portland | 8 | 180 | 4.44 |
| Preston | 8 | 258 | 3.10 |
| Ranby | 6 | 216 | 2.78 |
| Reading | 4 | 123 | 3.25 |
| Risley | 9 | 269 | 3.35 |
| Rochester | 7 | 159 | 4.40 |
| Send | 5 | 71 | 7.04 |
| Shepton Mallet | 4 | 64 | 6.25 |
| Shrewsbury | 4 | 114 | 3.51 |
| Stafford | 6 | 179 | 3.35 |
| Standford Hill | 6 | 81 | 7.41 |
| Stocken | 5 | 144 | 3.47 |
| Stoke Heath | 9 | 225 | 4.00 |
| Styal | 8 | 169 | 4.73 |
| Sudbury | 6 | 62 | 9.68 |
| Swaleside | 9 | 241 | 3.73 |
| Swansea | 5 | 127 | 3.94 |
| Swinfen Hall | 4 | 130 | 3.08 |
| The Mount | 6 | 153 | 3.92 |
| The Verne | 7 | 124 | 5.65 |
| Thorn Cross | 6 | 116 | 5.17 |
| Usk/Prescoed | 3 | 88 | 3.41 |
| Wakefield | 16 | 362 | 4.42 |
| Wandsworth | 9 | 404 | 2.23 |
| Wayland | 6 | 140 | 4.29 |
| Wealstun | 7 | 145 | 4.83 |
| Weare | 5 | 118 | 4.24 |
| Wellingborough | 5 | 154 | 3.25 |
| Werrington | 4 | 77 | 5.19 |
| Wetherby | 6 | 147 | 4.08 |
| Whatton | 3 | 72 | 4.17 |
| Whitemoor | 10 | 479 | 2.09 |
| Winchester | 6 | 211 | 2.84 |
| Woodhill | 10 | 431 | 2.32 |
| Wormwood Scrubs | 11 | 340 | 3.24 |
| Wymott | 11 | 202 | 5.45 |

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of violence to prison officers have been recorded *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the southern area, and *(c)* in Isle of Wight prisons for each year since 1997, expressed (i) in total and (ii) per 1,000 officers. [7187]

**Beverley Hughes:** The information requested is set out in the tables.

*Adjudications on incidents of violence against prison officers in England and Wales since 1997, broken down by year and area[1] heard*

| | England | Wales | Southern area | Isle of Wight |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1997 | 2,184 | 33 | 505 | 24 |
| 1998 | 2,345 | 54 | 573 | 32 |
| 1999 | 2,295 | 36 | 552 | 28 |
| 2000 | 2,346 | 33 | 601 | 25 |
| 2001[2] | 1,965 | 18 | 509 | 39 |

*Adjudications on incidents of violence against prison officers in England and Wales since 1997, broken down by year and area[1] heard, per 1,000 officers[3]*

| | England | Wales | Southern area | Isle of Wight |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1997 | 121.7 | 88.2 | 151.3 | 50.2 |
| 1998 | 128.8 | 148.4 | 170.6 | 77.5 |
| 1999 | 124.1 | 98.4 | 161.4 | 69.7 |
| 2000 | 126.0 | 89.4 | 175.2 | 65.6 |
| 2001[2] | — | — | — | — |

[1] Figures cannot be added to make area totals as prisoners appear in more than one category

[2] From 1 January to 30 September

[3] Figures do not include private prisons, and are for 31 March of each year

## Prison Governors

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional discretion in the conduct of their duties has been devolved to prison governors over the last four years; and if he will make a statement. [5505]

**Beverley Hughes:** We keep the balance between a prison governor's local autonomy and direction from headquarters under constant review. In the last four years, prison governors have been given additional discretion in the conduct of their duties in a number of areas including:

in August 2000, contractual delegation under full competition increased to £25,000 for spot/annual contracts and to £75,000 where the strategy is for a three year period contract (lower levels of authority apply for single tender actions and on other sensitive procurements);

central training requirements and giving governors discretion to decide which of their members of staff should attend particular courses;

in February 2001, governors were given responsibility for approving applications for release on temporary licence for life sentence prisoners preparing for release in open and resettlement prisons. This is subject to an initial application being approved by Lifer Unit at Prison Service Headquarters.

We expect governors to work autonomously to improve performance and maintain decent conditions for prisoners within the guidelines set down by the Prison Service Management Board.

### Prison Reprofiling

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons which have been reprofiled in the last four years; and what change there was in the number of jobs recommended in each reprofiling exercise. [5502]

**Beverley Hughes:** The information sought is not available centrally and could be acquired only at disproportionate cost.

### Police (Absence)

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many days off sick were taken by police officers in *(a)* 1996–97, *(b)* 1997–98, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01; and if he will make a statement. [5788]

**Mr. Denham:** The number of days taken off sick by police officers are set out in the table.

| *Years* | *Days lost* |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 1,612,038 |
| 1997–98 | 1,597,000 |
| 1998–99 | 1,468,140 |
| 1999–2000 | 1,432,963 |
| 2000–01 | 1,516,147 |

*Source:*
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

We are currently considering, with stakeholders, how we can improve the fitness, the readiness and the availability of the police service as part of the police reform process.

### SO19 Specialist Firearms Unit

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the manpower available to the Metropolitan Police SO19 specialist firearms unit. [5784]

**Mr. Denham:** The allocation of resources within the Metropolitan Police Service is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. As at 31 August, SO19's actual strength was 335.

### Policing (Civilians)

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans to allow civilians to carry out policing and detection tasks. [5782]

**Mr. Denham:** Two key objectives of the police reform programme are to ensure modern working practices and the highest standards of detective capability. Civilians already carry out many tasks in support of policing and there is potential for them to do more. Issues about how the reform process might be used to develop the part civilians play within policing remain under discussion with representatives of the service.

### Drug Dealers

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to create a national register of drug dealers; and if he will make a statement. [6219]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** We gave a manifesto commitment to create a register of drug dealers. We are currently considering the options for creating such a register, and consulting with the enforcement agencies on the practicalities.

### Essex Police

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many serving constables there were in the Essex police force *(a)* in 1997 and *(b)* on the most recent date for which figures are available. [6226]

**Mr. Denham:** Information on police numbers is collected twice a year on 31 March and 30 September. The Essex police had 2,269 constables on 31 March 1997 and 2,234 constables on 31 March 2001.

The Crime Fighting Fund (CFF) is providing Essex police with 197 CFF posts over the three-year period 2000–01 to 2002–03. Essex police plan to recruit 132 CFF posts this year. All these will be constables.

Essex police employed 1,199 civilian staff in March 1997 and 1,447 in March 2001.

### Case Reviews

**Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines have been issued to police forces on the criteria used in determining cases to be reviewed because of new evidence becoming available, with particular reference to DNA proofing techniques; and if he will make a statement. [5564]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* There are no general guidelines issued to police forces on the criteria for determining which cases should be reviewed. Forces make decisions based on the circumstances of individual cases and the nature of the new evidence which has become available.

The Forensic Science Service advises forces when new techniques emerge which may be relevant to unsolved cases. The Association of Chief Police Officers provides guidance to forces on reviewing unsolved murders where there is an issue of new evidence.

## Women Prisoners

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women were sent to prison by courts in England and Wales during each of the last three years. [6371]

**Beverley Hughes:** The available information, taken from the Home Office's Court Proceedings Database, is given in the table.

*Number of women sentenced to immediate custody, England and Wales 1997–99*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1997 | 5,473 |
| 1998 | 6,567 |
| 1999 | 7,504 |

*Note:*
Immediate custody comprises unsuspended imprisonment, detention in a young offender institution, secure training orders and detention under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

## Bilking

**Margaret Moran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many petrol station bilking incidents in each of the last five years in which police were involved occurred in *(a)* England and *(b)* Luton; [6387]

(2) how many petrol station bilking incidents where police were involved led to prosecutions in *(a)* England and *(b)* Luton; and in each of the last five years in what percentage of such incidents police attended; [6388]

(3) if he will estimate the cost of police involvement in bilking at petrol stations in each of the past five years in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales. [6385]

**Mr. Denham:** The statistics collected centrally do not include the circumstances of the offence so that offences of making off without payment (bilking) from petrol stations cannot be distinguished from similar offences at other premises.

The number of such incidents, the percentage of such incidents being attended by the police and the estimated cost to the police are therefore not centrally available.

The table provides information from the Home Office Court Proceedings Database and shows the total number of prosecutions for making off without payment (bilking) in England, Wales and in the Luton Petty Sessional Area.

*Persons proceeded against for making off without payment (bilking)[1] in England, Wales and Luton Petty Sessional Division 1995–1999*

| Area | Proceedings type | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| England | Apprehension/Summons by the police | 1,491 | 1,425 | 1,493 | 1,621 | 1,832 |
| | Summons other than by police | 17 | 18 | 13 | 8 | 6 |
| | Total | 1,508 | 1,443 | 1,506 | 1,629 | 1,838 |
| Wales | Apprehension/Summons by the police | 117 | 88 | 110 | 140 | 149 |
| | Summons other than by police | — | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| | Total | 117 | 89 | 111 | 140 | 149 |
| Luton Petty Sessional Area | Apprehension/Summons by the police | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| | Summons other than by police | — | — | — | — | — |
| | Total | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 8 |

[1] Theft Act 1978, Section 3
*Source:*
Home Office Crime and Criminal Justice Unit

## Wide Loads (Police Escorts)

**Mr. Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost was to the Metropolitan police of escorting wide loads in each year since 1997. [6283]

**Mr. Denham:** Information on the distances travelled by the police escorting wide loads and on the time spent by officers in escort duties is not collected centrally or by the Metropolitan police. It is not possible, therefore, to calculate the costs of this to the Metropolitan police. The available information relates only to the number of wide loads escorted. The figures are:

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1998 | 1,267 |
| 1999 | 1,229 |
| 2000 | 924 |
| 2001 (to 30 September) | 469 |

*Note:*
Figures are not available prior to 1998

## Feltham B Young Offenders Institution

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on conditions at Feltham B Young Offenders Institution. [6378]

**Beverley Hughes:** In a report published on 26 July, the then Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham, rightly criticised the poor regime at Feltham B and compared it to that for under 18-year-old prisoners at Feltham A, which had benefited from major investment to meet Youth Justice Board standards.

Improvements to the regime on Feltham B are now a priority. Purposeful activity is currently over 23 hours per week. Two additional physical education instructors and one horticultural craftsman have been appointed, with further additional posts approved. The completion of a new education facility for under-18s means that the original facility is now exclusively available to Feltham B prisoners, providing up to 70 places a day. £500,000 is being invested from the Custody to Work programme to help the

employability of young people on release, and £575,000 is being spent to convert existing buildings into a new gymnasium.

Four bedded units have been reduced to two-person occupancy, and doubling in cells intended for one has ended. In-cell electricity has been installed in four units with a fifth under way.

I am taking a close personal interest in developments at Feltham and I am determined to see that progress is maintained.

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held with the Chief Inspector of Prisons with regard to the management of Feltham B Young Offenders Institution; and if he will make a statement. [6379]

**Beverley Hughes:** My right hon. Friend met the former Chief Inspector of Prisons on 11 July although they did not specifically discuss Feltham B. I visited Feltham B with Sir David Ramsbotham on 16 July and subsequently discussed what I had seen there with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He has given his full support to my determination, and that of the Director General, to implement fundamental improvements at Feltham.

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many average hours of purposeful activity there were at Feltham B Young Offenders' Institute in *(a)* 1999–2000 and *(b)* 2000–01; and if he will make a statement. [6377]

**Beverley Hughes:** Figures for purposeful activity were not collected separately for Feltham A and Feltham B in previous years. The average figures for purposeful activity across the whole of Feltham young offender institution were 15.2 hours a week in 1999–2000 and 14.4 hours a week in 2000–01.

Improving purposeful activity in Feltham B is a priority for the Prison Service. Separate figures are now kept, and purposeful activity in Feltham B has increased from 11.7 hours in April this year to over 23 hours a week.

I am determined this improvement should be maintained.

### Home Detention Curfew

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 25 June 2001, *Official Report*, column 43W, on the home detention curfew scheme, if he will make a statement on the circumstances of the third rape committed by a prisoner while on home detention curfew. [6319]

**Beverley Hughes:** The person referred to in the right hon. Member's question has appeared before the courts and was acquitted.

### Stop and Search

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what estimate he has made of the effect on the level of police paperwork of the requirement to record all stops; and if he will make a statement; [6375]

(2) when the requirement on the police to record the ethnicity of all suspects stopped by the police will be implemented; and if he will make a statement. [6370]

**Mr. Denham:** Following extensive consultation with the police, communities and other key stakeholders, we have agreed in principle to accept recommendation 61 of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, which was that all police "stops" and "searches" should be recorded and a record given to the person stopped. We have asked the stop and search sub-group of the Lawrence Steering Group to draw up detailed implementation plans for this recommendation and to finalise the definition of a stop for recording purposes. We have particularly asked them to have regard to minimising the burden on police officers.

### Chief Inspector of Prisons

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the role of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. [6380]

**Beverley Hughes:** The role of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, which is fixed by statute, is to:

inspect or arrange the inspection of prisons in England and Wales and report to the Home Secretary;

in particular report to the Home Secretary on the treatment of prisoners and conditions in prisons;

report to the Home Secretary on matters connected with the prisons in England and Wales and prisoners in them as the Home Secretary directs; and

submit an annual report to the Home Secretary in a form which the Home Secretary determines to be laid before Parliament.

Terms of reference have been completed as a public record of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons' (and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Probation's) statutory remit, responsibilities and entitlements. Copies of both documents have been placed in the Library.

### Ouseley Report

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the findings of Sir Herman Ouseley's report on the impact of segregated schools on the riots in Bradford. [7120]

**Angela Eagle:** Lord Ouseley's report was commissioned and prepared for Bradford Vision, a partnership involving local government, police and other agencies.

The ministerial group on Public Order and Community Cohesion delivered its first report to the Home Secretary on 8 October. The report covers progress on the measures put in hand immediately following my statement to the House on 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 663, and makes proposals for further measures to address the issues raised by the serious public order disturbances earlier this summer.

The ministerial group expects to complete its work in December when it will submit a further report. That report will, among other things, take account of the independent Review Team, which I also established following the disorders in Bradford in July. Once the group has presented its final report and we have concluded our review I shall be making a statement.

### Prisoners (Meditation)

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the benefits of meditation practices to prisoners. [8011]

**Beverley Hughes:** Meditation is one of a limited number of complementary therapies which Prison Service establishments were instructed in 1998 could be made available to individual prisoners on the recommendation of the prison doctor, strictly for health reasons. When drawing up the relevant instruction the Prison Service took advice from the Department of Health. The Prison Service has made no formal assessment of the benefits to prisoners of meditation practices since that instruction was issued.

### Congestion Charging

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use by police forces for unconnected purposes of information collected as part of congestion charging arrangements. [6023]

**Mr. Denham:** The disclosure of information by police forces is subject to compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The general position is that the police may use personal information in their possession as long as this is necessary for pursuing a legitimate policing purpose.

An individual's details would not normally be disclosed for another purpose unless the consent of the individual is first obtained, or it was required for compliance with a legal obligation, or there is an overriding public interest in disclosure.

### Firearms

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences involving the use of firearms have been recorded for each of the last five years where the offender was *(a)* under 10, *(b)* 10, *(c)* 11, *(d)* 12, *(e)* 13, *(f)* 14, *(g)* 15, *(h)* 16 and *(i)* 17 years. [7248]

**Mr. Denham:** This information is not collected centrally.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to restrict the *(a)* sale, *(b)* possession and *(c)* use of air guns and rifles. [7246]

**Mr. Denham:** There are already laws which govern the circumstances in which air weapons can be sold, possessed or used. We believe that much can be done to tackle air weapon misuse through the enforcement of these laws and through public education on the safe and responsible handling of these firearms. We have asked the Firearms Consultative Committee to consider how best to take this forward and to consider whether there are any other measures which might usefully be taken to guard against misuse.

### GM Animals

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason no data is collected in respect of *(a)* deaths occurring prior to birth during the production of genetically modified animals and *(b)* the stage of foetal development at which failures occur. [8002]

**Angela Eagle:** The production of genetically modified animals (as well as their use in experiments or other scientific procedures) is controlled under the terms of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. The production and use of such animals allows new areas of medical and other scientific research to be explored; provides the potential for investigating a wide variety of conditions including cancer, cystic fibrosis and multiple sclerosis; and allows the quality of the science in many areas of research and testing to be improved.

Table 3 of the Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain 2000 (Cm 5244) provides comprehensive data on scientific procedures by species of animal, primary purpose (including breeding) and genetic status. Paragraph 12 of the Introductory Notes to the statistics explains that details of procedures on animals in foetal, larval or embryonic form are collected but not enumerated because it may be impracticable in some cases to count such procedures.

Foetal deaths in the species that are commonly genetically modified are difficult or impossible to enumerate as a result of resorption of the foetal material and there may be no outward sign that this has happened. It may never have been established that the animal was pregnant, it will not have been known how many embryos were conceived, nor how many reached halfway through gestation. It would not therefore be feasible to collect the information in question. Embryonic forms do not become protected animals under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 until they are beyond halfway through gestation.

### Dr. Ali Dizaei

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on developments in the investigation of Dr. Ali Dizaei, including its costs. [7151]

**Mr. Denham:** The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the investigation is still active and on-going.

### Illegal Immigrants

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of illegal immigrants employed in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years. [7211]

**Angela Eagle:** No such estimate has been made in the last five years or previously of the numbers of those involved in illegal employment. The Home Office will shortly be commissioning research to obtain information about the size and characteristics of the illegal population.

The Government are, however, determined to tackle the criminal gangs who are trading in human misery. Last year a multi-agency task force, chaired by the National Crime Squad, was created and is leading the United Kingdom's response to this problem.

### Digital Television (Prisons)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what expenditure has been

*(a)* incurred to date and *(b)* budgeted for in (i) monthly and (ii) quarterly subscriptions for digital television in prisoners' cells; [7495]

(2) what expenditure has been *(a)* incurred to date and *(b)* is projected during the next year on installation of in-cell digital TV services for convicted prisoners; [7497]

(3) how many convicted prisoners have access to *(a)* ITV digital and *(b)* other digital TV services in their own cells. [7496]

**Beverley Hughes:** The policy of the Prison Service is that prisoners should have access only to the five analogue terrestrial television channels in their cells.

### Asylum Seekers

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applicants have been dispersed to the borough of Trafford in each of the last five years. [7208]

**Angela Eagle:** Asylum seekers were not dispersed centrally before April 2000.

Information recorded by National Asylum Support Service (NASS) shows that as at the end of July 2001, 50[1] asylum seekers, including dependants, were being supported in NASS accommodation in Trafford after dispersal.

[1] Figure rounded to the nearest 10.

### Enforcements (Immigrants)

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many enforcements were made on immigrants in each month from May; what the nationalities of those removed was; how many of those removed were asylum seekers; to which countries they were sent; on which airlines they were removed; and how many were removed by charter flights. [7683]

**Angela Eagle:** Enforcement action relates to the removal of people who have entered the United Kingdom, either legally or illegally. It does not include cases dealt with "on-entry".

Information for the period requested is not available. The most recent information was published in the "Control of Immigration Bulletin, United Kingdom 2000" on 24 August 2001. This shows that 8,370 persons had been removed of whom 3,540 had sought asylum at some stage. This figure excludes dependants, but includes persons leaving under the Voluntary Assisted Returns Programme.

More recent information shows that during the second quarter of 2001, 1,500 persons who had sought asylum at some stage either left the United Kingdom or were removed after enforcement action had been initiated. This figure includes dependants and persons leaving under the Voluntary Assisted Returns Programme. Corresponding information on non-asylum removals is not, at present, available for the period.

I regret that information on the nationality, destination and flight details is not available.

### Asylum Voucher System

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish his review of the operation of the asylum voucher system; and if he will make a statement. [7629]

**Angela Eagle:** The Home Secretary intends to report on the reviews of the voucher and dispersal schemes when he announces his proposals about immigration and asylum policy later this month.

### Immigrant Detainees

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained under immigration rules at the end of *(a)* July, *(b)* August and *(c)* September; what the nationalities of those detained is; what the location of those detained is; and how many have been detained more than (i) two, (ii) three, (iii) four and (iv) five months. [7684]

**Angela Eagle:** The latest available information on the number of persons detained under Immigration Act powers relates to 30 June 2001; the location, nationality and length of detention of persons detained as at this date is given in the tables. Of the total, 245 persons are being detained under dual Immigration and other powers.

| *Location* | *Immigration Act detainees as at 30 June 2001*[1] |
|---|---|
| Armley | 10 |
| Belmarsh | 50 |
| Brixton | 15 |
| Campsfield House | 185 |
| Cardiff | 45 |
| Dover Harbour | 5 |
| Harmondsworth | 80 |
| Haslar | 155 |
| High Down | 45 |
| Holme House | 55 |
| Lindholme | 110 |
| Liverpool | 85 |
| Longport | 10 |
| Manchester Airport | 15 |
| Rochester | 180 |
| The Mount | 10 |
| The Verne | 10 |
| Tinsley House | 125 |
| Wandsworth | 55 |
| Winchester | 45 |
| Wormwood Scrubs | 25 |
| Other prison establishments[2] | 180 |
| Oakington Reception Centre | 265 |
| Total | 1,760 |

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest five, and exclude persons detained in police cells. Figures include 245 persons who are recorded as being detained under dual immigration and other powers.
[2] Other prison establishments with five or fewer detainees.

| *Nationality* | *Immigration Act detainees as at 30 June 2001*[1] |
|---|---|
| Afghanistan | 25 |
| Albania | 80 |
| Algeria | 75 |
| Angola | 10 |
| Bangladesh | 50 |
| Cameroon | 20 |
| China, People's Republic of | 85 |
| Colombia | 15 |

| *Nationality* | *Immigration Act detainees as at 30 June 2001*[1] |
|---|---|
| Czech Republic | 115 |
| Gambia | 10 |
| Ghana | 40 |
| India | 115 |
| Iran | 15 |
| Iraq | 30 |
| Ivory Coast | 15 |
| Jamaica | 110 |
| Kenya | 25 |
| Latvia | 10 |
| Lithuania | 30 |
| Moldova | 10 |
| Morocco | 15 |
| Nigeria | 85 |
| Pakistan | 140 |
| Poland | 35 |
| Romania | 40 |
| Russia | 15 |
| South Africa | 15 |
| Sri Lanka | 65 |
| Turkey | 35 |
| Uganda | 20 |
| Ukraine | 45 |
| Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of | 125 |
| Zimbabwe | 110 |
| Other nationalities[2] | 140 |
| Total | 1,760 |

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest five, and exclude persons detained in police cells. Figures include 245 persons who are recorded as being detained under dual immigration and other powers.
[2] Other nationalities with five or fewer detainees.

| *Length of detention*[1] | *Immigration Act detainees as at 30 June 2001*[2] |
|---|---|
| More than 2 months | 660 |
| of which, more than 3 months | 475 |
| of which, more than 4 months | 380 |
| of which, more than 5 months | 300 |

[1] Relates to current period of detention; where persons have been transferred to and subsequently from the Oakington Reception Centre, excludes time in detention prior to transfer from Oakington.
[2] Figures rounded to the nearest five, and exclude persons detained in police cells and the Oakington Reception Centre. Figures include 130 persons who are recorded as being detained under dual immigration and other powers.

### Abu Hamza and Omar Bakri Mohammed

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review (1) the immigration status of Abu Hamza; and if he will make a statement; [7533]

(2) the indefinite leave to remain status of Omar Bakri Mohammed granted in 1993; and if he will make a statement. [7532]

**Angela Eagle:** The police are well aware of the statements made by these individuals in recent weeks and are monitoring the situation and are considering whether any offences have been committed.

### Race Hate Legislation

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce proposals to amend race hate laws to include an offence of incitement of race hatred outside the UK through statements made inside the UK; and if he will make a statement. [7529]

**Angela Eagle:** The Government intend to bring forward proposals to amend the law on incitement to racial hatred, as my hon. Friend suggests, to remove the existing limitation in the law which means that only hatred directed at a group of persons in Great Britain is covered by the offences.

The Government have also announced their intention to propose this change as part of a package of measures to strengthen the incitement to racial hatred provisions contained in Part III of the Public Order Act 1986 and in particular to extend those provisions to the incitement to religious hatred.

### National Asylum Support Service

**Mrs. Ellman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment he has made of the efficiency and accountability of the National Asylum Support Service. [7416]

**Angela Eagle:** The efficiency of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) in delivering its operations is kept under review by its senior management who report to Ministers as necessary. The reviews of the voucher and dispersal schemes have also involved looking at the way NASS operates and whether this can be improved.

As a part of the Home Office, NASS is accountable to Ministers for what it does. It also is open to scrutiny by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee.

### Police Force Boundaries

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the advantages and disadvantages of the introduction of a police force based on local authority district boundaries. [6079]

**Mr. Denham:** We have no present plans for the alteration of police areas.

Forces based on local authority districts would be unable economically to provide the full range of police services and the capacity to respond to major incidents.

### Unauthorised Encampments

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the law on unauthorised encampments. [7149]

**Mr. Denham:** The police already have powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to direct travellers or other trespassers to leave land when the appropriate statutory requirements are met. These are discretionary powers and it is the operational responsibility of the chief officer of the force concerned to decide when and how to enforce these powers. The effectiveness of this legislation is kept under regular review.

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review guidance to police forces about the enforcement of public order legislation on travellers' camps. [7156]

**Mr. Denham:** The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) provides operational guidance to police forces on

powers to direct travellers or other trespassers to leave land when the appropriate statutory requirements are met. This guidance is kept under regular review.

Research has been conducted to review the effectiveness of the current Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)/Home Office Good Practice Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Camping. I understand that the DTLR will be publishing a summary of the findings shortly, in the week commencing 29 October.

### Long Lartin Prison

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for further development at Long Lartin prison; and if he will make a statement. [6610]

**Beverley Hughes:** A major refurbishment of older prisoner accommodation at the prison will begin early next year. This programme of work is due for completion in late 2003. Long Lartin has recently been granted Department of Health funding to allow a small unit to be constructed within the prison to cater for the mental health needs of prisoners. Funding has also been provided to allow Long Lartin to designate a small number of cells in the segregation unit for monitoring and support of prisoners who have refused to co-operate with the Close Supervision Centre system for disruptive prisoners.

### Youth Justice Board Review 2000–01

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost was of publication and circulation of the Youth Justice Board Review 2000–01; and to whom the document was circulated. [6521]

**Beverley Hughes:** The publication costs of the Youth Justice Board's Annual Review 2000–01 were £26,785 with circulation costs of £4,856.28. Copies were distributed to youth offending teams; senior officers in social services, police, probation, education and health; magistrates and the courts; the juvenile secure estate, Members of Parliament and Ministers.

### Miscarriages of Justice (Compensation)

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent changes have been made to the method of calculation of compensation to be awarded to victims of miscarriages of justice; if he will place a document setting out the Independent Assessor's approach in the Library; what measures he will take to ensure that victims may benefit proportionately from these changes; and how many people are awaiting settlement of compensation claims. [7081]

**Mr. Keith Bradley:** In calculating the amount of compensation to be awarded to victims of miscarriages of justice, the independent assessor applies principles analogous to those governing the assessment of damages for civil wrongs. He must, therefore, give effect to any developments which may occur in the law and have regard to such judicial authority as there may be at the time of making an assessment. To that extent, the background against which he has to assess compensation is changing all the time. There has recently been a change of assessor (Lord Daniel Brennan succeeded Sir David Calcutt with effect from 27 July) but that does not mean that there has been a change in how compensation is calculated because, whoever is the assessor, the same principles will be applied.

The basis on which compensation is assessed is made clear in statute (section 133(4A) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988); in the Home office "Compensation for Miscarriages of Justice—Note for Successful Applicants" (copies of which have already been placed in the Library); and in individual Assessments.

As at 20 September 2001 there were 112 cases where a decision had been made to pay compensation but for a variety of reasons the claim had yet to be settled. These range from the many cases where successful applicants have yet to submit the details of their claims to the few where a final assessment has been made but not yet accepted.

### Strip Searches (Holloway)

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what method the number of strip searches is recorded at HMP Holloway; how many searches carried out in *(a)* the last year and *(b)* each of the previous five years; and what items of (i) contraband and (ii) other confiscated items have been recorded in each year. [7080]

**Beverley Hughes:** The available information on the number of searches is set out in the table. Prisoners are required to undergo strip searches in a number of circumstances, including whenever they pass through reception on their way into or out of prison establishments; prior to providing a sample of urine for a mandatory drugs test (MDT); and in connection with routine and targeted strip searches. A percentage of prisoners are strip searched before and after visits, and prisoners may also be strip searched at any time when it is believed that they may be concealing unauthorised articles. Prisoners in the Health Care Centre and Detox Units at Holloway prison may also be strip searched if staff believe they may be concealing articles which could be used to harm themselves or others.

In my written answer on 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 99W, to my hon. Friend, I referred to the consideration being given to upgrading the prisoner database to provide statistical recording and monitoring of strip searches. That work is still continuing. In the meantime, the position at Holloway is that a register is maintained of strip searches associated with visits. A separate register is maintained of prisoners undergoing MDT. Cell searches are recorded on the appropriate form. However, while movement through reception will be recorded against the individual prisoner's record on the Local Inmate Database System, there is no requirement to record strip searches conducted in reception.

It is not possible to identify the unauthorised articles for every find, but the principal finds at Holloway have been of drugs and tablets, tobacco, jewellery, telephone cards, cash, confectionery and unauthorised correspondence. In 1998 and 2000, there were also instances of weapons being discovered in searches prior to MDT.

*Number of strip searches undertaken*

| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Visits | 315 | 425 | 201 | 121 | 26 |
| Cell searches | [2]— | [2]— | [2]— | [3]1,034 | 505 |
| Segregation unit | [2]— | [3]1,326 | [3]1,200 | [3]1,334 | [3]823 |
| MDT | [2]— | 805 | 740 | 646 | 458 |
| Reception | [3]18,000 | [3]18,000 | [3]18,000 | [3]18,000 | [3]18,000 |

[1] to 29 September

[2] not available

[3] approximately

## South Africa

**Mr. Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people arrived from South Africa and took advantage of their eligibility to live in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1999 and *(b)* 2000. [6636]

**Angela Eagle:** Information on the total number of South Africans given leave to enter the United Kingdom is given in the table. The following categories are those which identify passengers who are eligible to remain in the United Kingdom for more than six months:

United Kingdom ancestry and their dependants

Work permit holders and their dependants

Family reasons

Accepted for settlement on arrival

Other categories eligible for admission for more than six months

Refugees, exceptional leave cases and their dependants

*Nationals of South Africa given leave to enter the United Kingdom by selected purpose of journey, 1999 and 2000*

| | 1999 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|
| Total admissions | 349,000 | 415,000 |
| *Of which:* | | |
| UK ancestry[1] | 2,540 | 2,470 |
| Work permit holders and their dependants | 4,360 | 5,360 |
| Family reasons | 1,820 | 1,540 |
| Accepted for settlement on arrival[2] | 200 | 110 |
| Other categories eligible for admission for more than six months[3] | 15,700 | 11,700 |
| Refugees, exceptional leave cases and their dependants[4] | 10 | [5]— |
| Categories given short-term admission up to six months and passengers returning after a temporary absence abroad | 325,000 | 394,000 |

[1] South African citizens with a United Kingdom born grandparent taking or seeking employment

[2] Excludes asylum related cases given indefinite leave to enter

[3] Excludes exceptional leave cases given leave to enter

[4] Excluding such persons given temporary admission

[5] Negligible ie 5 or fewer

*Note:*

Data rounded to three significant digits; because of this the sum of the constituent items may not agree with the total shown.

## Exclusion Orders

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a list of the individuals who are excluded from entering Britain because exclusion orders have been served on them, specifying in each case the date on which the order was served and the reason for which the order was served. [6560]

**Angela Eagle:** It is Home Office policy not to reveal any individual's immigration status to a third party. I am unable, therefore, to provide a list of named individuals who are currently excluded from the United Kingdom.

The Home Secretary's personal power to exclude is used carefully to ensure the protection of public order, national security, and for purposes of foreign relations. In the year 2000 26 people were excluded. Since 1990 a total of 297 people have been excluded.

## Prison Education Services

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the rationale for the transfer of responsibility for purchasing and commissioning prison education services from governors; [7199]

(2) who in the prison service will be responsible for commissioning and purchasing prison education services when that responsibility transfers from governors. [7198]

**Beverley Hughes:** Contracts for prison education services are due to run until 2004. Under these arrangements, prison governors retain the responsibility for commissioning and purchasing services. The prisoner Learning and Skills Unit based at the Department for Education and Skills will be reviewing mechanisms for funding, procurement and delivery of education and training. The outcomes of this review will determine where responsibility will lie after 2004.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* NVQs and *(b)* other nationally recognised qualifications have been achieved by prisoners in each year since 1997. [7202]

**Beverley Hughes:** Last year, over 60,000 certificates were awarded to prisoners for units of attainment leading to nationally recognised qualifications, including nearly 12,500 full qualifications at basic skills level 2. No reliable information is available on the achievement of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) specifically, or for qualifications achieved in the period before 2000. The Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit located in the Department for Education and Skills will be implementing new procedures next year to capture this kind of information.

## Offending Behaviour Courses

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offending behaviour courses have been completed by prisoners *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the southern area and *(c)* in Isle of Wight prisons, for each year since 1997, expressed (i) in total and (ii) per 1,000 prisoners. [7189]

**Beverley Hughes:** The total number of accredited offending behaviour programmes (OBPs) completed by prisoners (a) nationally, (b) in the south of England and (c) in Isle of Wight (IoW) prisons since 1997–1998, and per 1,000 prisoners are set out in the tables.

*Total accredited offending behaviour programmes (OBPs)*

| | *Total OBPs* | *Thames Valley and Hampshire* | *IoW prisons* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1997–98 | 2,240 | 260 | 201 |
| 1998–99 | 3,129 | 333 | 184 |
| 1999–2000 | 4,664 | 503 | 243 |
| 2000–01 | 5,986 | 483 | 266 |

*Total accredited offending behaviour programmes per 1,000 prisoners*

| | *Total OBPs* | *Thames Valley and Hampshire* | *IoW prisons* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1997–98 | 35.9 | 68.4 | 156.5 |
| 1998–99 | 48.0 | 81.5 | 140.3 |
| 1999–2000 | 71.6 | 121.3 | 180.7 |
| 2000–01 | 92.5 | 118.7 | 194.8 |

South of England data have been derived by summing the ten establishments in the Prison Service area Thames Valley and Hampshire. The prisons on the Isle of Wight are HMP Albany, HMP Camp Hill and HMP Parkhurst.

Data on accredited offending behaviour programmes and other key performance indicators are published in the Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts 2000–2001 (HC29).

Data are subject to rounding.

## Category C Prisoners

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category C prisoners are held in category B establishments *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the southern area and *(c)* in Isle of Wight prisons (i) in total and (ii) per 1,000 prisoners. [7200]

**Beverley Hughes:** The information requested is contained in the table and was the position as at 9 October 2001.

| | *England and Wales* | *Within the Southern Area* | *On the Isle of Wight*[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Part 1* | | | |
| Number of category C Prisoners held in category B prisons[2] | 14,053 | 1,117 | 91 |
| *Part 2* | | | |
| Number of category C prisoners held in category B prisons per 1,000 prisoners held in category B prisons | 385 | 335 | 107 |

[1] For the purposes of this answer, the southern area is taken to be the Prison Service management area of Thames Valley, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

[2] Category B prisons include adult male local and adult male category B training prisons

## Mentally Ill Prisoners

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research has been conducted to identify the incidence of drug-induced psychosis among mentally ill prisoners; and if he will make a statement. [7201]

**Beverley Hughes:** We do not know of any research that has been conducted specifically to identify the incidence of drug-induced psychosis among mentally ill prisoners in England and Wales. Information about rates of psychosis in the prison population as a whole is contained in the report, "Psychiatric Morbidity Among Prisoners", published by the Office For National Statistics in 1998.

## Non-life-Sentenced prisoners

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are in place to plan and monitor the prison career of non-life-sentenced prisoners. [7188]

**Beverley Hughes:** In 1992, the Prison Service introduced the current sentence planning arrangements for non-life-sentenced prisoners. Sentence plans are now prepared for all adult prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or more (with at least six months to serve post sentence) and all young offenders with at least one month to serve post sentence. Life sentenced prisoners have their own sentence planning system. Juveniles (under 18s) have equivalent training plans.

The Prison Service sentence planning system is designed to co-ordinate the efforts of different individuals and agencies involved with the prisoner. It is used to help prepare prisoners for safe release and to make best use of the prisoner's time. It does this by encouraging them to address the reasons for their offending behaviour and by giving planned experience of work, training and education. Targets are set and progress reviewed at specified intervals. All prisoners involved in sentence planning are subject to a period of supervision under licence by the probation service after release.

Short-sentence prisoners, not covered by sentence planning, are still subject to various assessments. All prisoners have a health care assessment on reception and then, during induction, staff will begin to assess prisoners for drug treatment needs, education and resettlement needs.

A new system to assess prisoner risk and need, target interventions and plan for prisoners' release is currently being piloted.

### Terrorist Organisations

**Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will *(a)* list those organisations which he regards as terrorist and *(b)* make a statement on the strategies he proposes to deploy to counter their threat. [7425]

**Mr. Blunkett:** Schedule 2 to the Terrorism Act 2000, which came into force on 19 February 2001, lists those organisations which are proscribed through being concerned in terrorism. The Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2001, which came into force on 29 March, added 21 organisations to the 14 already in Schedule 2. Copies of the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2001 are available in the Library.

The Terrorism Act 2000 provides a new legal framework, responding to the continuing need for specific powers to combat the current and future threat from all kinds of terrorism. I announced on 3 October further details of the package of anti-terrorism measures which are under consideration as part of the Government's legislative response to terrorism. The bills that the Government will put before Parliament will focus on practical measures which will deter and disrupt the activities of terrorists in the United Kingdom, and build on our current tough framework of anti-terrorism legislation.

### Unaccompanied Luggage

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reported cases of *(a)* unidentified, and *(b)* other unaccompanied luggage arriving at British airports there have been since 11 September; which airports have received such luggage; which airlines have transported the luggage; what action the Minister plans to take against airlines which allow such practice to continue; and if he will make a statement. [7432]

**Mr. Jamieson:** I have been asked to reply.

My Department does not require any records to be kept of unidentified or unaccompanied baggage arriving in the UK. Any such baggage which is leaving the UK for a flight to any other destination will be screened to a higher standard before being loaded for flight under existing security requirements.

### City Status

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects the announcement will be made on which town has been granted city status to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the throne; [6320]

(2) if applications by those towns which applied unsuccessfully for city status to commemorate the Third Millennium will be considered as applications for city status to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the throne; [6321]

(3) what plans he has to publish criteria for towns wishing to apply for city status to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the throne; and if he will make a statement; [6322]

(4) when he will invite applications for city status to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the throne. [6323]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Telford (David Wright) on 20 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 787W.

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will sit on the committee which will consider applications by towns which wish to be granted city status to commemorate the 50 Anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the Throne. [6339]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** I have been asked to reply.

Decisions on the grant of city status are made by the Queen, under the royal prerogative, on the advice of Ministers. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor will be responsible for advising the Queen on the towns in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to be granted city status to mark Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee after consulting other Ministers as he judges appropriate. These will include the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.

Ministers will be advised by their officials in the normal way. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department and I will not be involved in the consideration process because of our constituencies' potential interests in the outcome.

## DEFENCE

### Porton Down

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a list of the titles and dates of films held by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down which recorded the establishment's trials with the chemical agent BZ in the 1960s. [6562]

**Dr. Moonie:** The following is a list of items from the archive at Porton Down which have been identified as relating to trials involving the incapacitating agent referred to as BZ. Some of these items are films and others are sound tracks only. The records are not dated and there may be other material in the archive concerning BZ which has not been identified or catalogued as BZ. These items listed are currently held by the Wiltshire police as part of their investigation into the Porton Down Volunteer programme.

| *Identified as:* | *Film/sound* |
|---|---|
| RF98 | Sound |
| RE17B | Film |
| 'BZ Trial' | Sound |
| Reel 4 | Film |
| Reel 5 | Film |
| Reel 6 | Film |
| Reel 7 | Film |
| Reel 8 | Film |
| Reel 9 | Film |
| Reel 11 | Film |
| Reel 12 | Film |
| Box Marked 'BZ Trial' | [1]Sound |
| RE17C | Sound |
| RE17 | Film |
| RF98 | Film |
| Box Marked 'Jim Sound' | [2]Sound |

[1] Five sound recordings

[2] Five relate to BZ recordings

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many MoD police officers have been involved in Wiltshire Constabulary inquiries into events at CBD Porton Down; what has been the cost to his Department; and if he will make a statement. [7376]

**Dr. Moonie:** Two Ministry of Defence Police Officers have been working with the Wiltshire Constabulary on Operation Antler, the inquiry into the Porton Down Service volunteer programme. The cost to date has been approximately £170,000 which includes salary and support costs.

In addition, one Royal Navy Regulator, two Royal Military Policemen and two Royal Air Force Policemen have been working with the Wiltshire Constabulary on this inquiry at an approximate total cost of £143,000.

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a representative of the Porton Down Veterans Support Group will be invited to the seminar in October at the head office of the Medical Research Council to discuss the epidemiological study of service volunteers who took part in experiments at the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down. [6576]

**Dr. Moonie:** Yes.

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates the independent Ethics Committee of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, scrutinised the study which took place in August 2000 involving RAF volunteers at the Rapier Detachment Engagement Trainer at RAF Honington; and if he will place in the Library copies of the papers of the committee which relate to the discussion of this study. [6561]

**Dr. Moonie:** The protocol for the study at RAF Honington was reviewed and approved by the Independent CBD Ethics Committee during their 22nd meeting held on 4 September 1997.

The discussions of the Independent CBD Ethics Committee are undertaken in confidence and I am therefore withholding the release of the complete minutes under exemption 2 of the Code of Practice to Access to Government Information. I will, however, place the section of the minutes relevant to this trial in the Library of the House.

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of the reports produced by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down *(a)* in 1972 entitled, "The effect of miosis on visual acuity in dim light", and *(b)* recording the results of an experiment in 1983 in which service personnel were exposed to sarin nerve gas via single fibre electromyography. [6574]

**Dr. Moonie:** Yes. I will also place in the Library of the House copies of two internal Porton Down papers that record the preliminary data and conclusions of the 1983 Study. The full results and final conclusions of this 1983 study have already been published entitled: Single fibre electromyographic changes in man after organophosphate exposure (Human and Experimental Toxicology 1996, 15, 367–75).

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the protocol drawn up by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, to carry out the study in August 2000 involving RAF volunteers at the Rapier Detachment Engagement Trainer at RAF Honington. [6581]

**Dr. Moonie:** Yes.

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the report produced by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down in 1973 entitled "A comparative study of central visual field changes induced by GB vapour and physostigmine salicylate eyedrops". [6563]

**Dr. Moonie:** Yes.

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the report arising out of the study in August 2000 involving RAF volunteers at the Rapier Detachment Engagement Trainer at RAF Honington organised by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down. [6580]

**Dr. Moonie:** The report in question contains operational information. I am therefore withholding its release under exemption 1(a) of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates staff of his Department held meetings with the Medical Research Council prior to 21 November 2000 to discuss seeking advice from the Council on the feasibility of an epidemiological study into volunteers who took part in experiments at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down. [6577]

**Dr. Moonie:** No such meetings were held with the Medical Research Council prior to 21 November 2000.

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason the War Pension Agency started on 19 February to identify as separate records claims for war pensions from service personnel who took part in experiments at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down. [6564]

**Dr. Moonie:** In order to improve available management information the War Pensions Agency decided to record separately War Pension claims from

ex-Service personnel who participated in trials at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down.

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will transfer films from the archives of the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, to the Imperial War Museum. [6575]

**Dr. Moonie:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 9 May 2001, *Official Report*, column 196W.

### Service Discipline

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many courts martial there were in each service in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 2000. [7403]

**Mr. Ingram:** I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the costs and benefits of *(a)* maintaining the courts martial system and *(b)* maintaining services disciplinary processes while transferring criminal cases to the ordinary courts. [7405]

**Mr. Ingram:** The system of military law, delivered through the Services' disciplinary processes which include courts martial, upholds the discipline structure inherent throughout the armed forces, and underpins tri-Service doctrine and the military chain of command that are both necessary for good order and operational effectiveness to be maintained. The military courts martial system has the statutory power and capability to deal with all but the most serious of criminal cases in the UK, subject to discussion over jurisdiction rights with appropriate civilian law agencies. Overseas, the military courts martial system has the power to deal with all military and civilian criminal cases, subject to agreement with the local authorities over jurisdiction rights. The benefit of transferring the most serious criminal cases to the ordinary courts allows a balance to be maintained between the military and civilian judicial systems. The costs of service courts martial accrue across the entire military system and are part of the running costs of each of the Services. It is therefore not possible to quote a figure separately for the military courts martial system.

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when there was last a review of the courts martial system. [7404]

**Mr. Ingram:** The system for administering discipline in the armed forces is kept under review, with the principal vehicle for any legislative changes that may be necessary being the five-yearly Armed Forces Acts. The Armed Forces Act 1996 made substantial changes in order to reinforce the independence of courts martial, and these came into effect on 1 April 1997. Further changes on this scale were not considered necessary as a result of the most recent review, which led to the Armed Forces Act 2001, not least because the procedures introduced in 1997 have worked very well.

We have announced the intention to replace the present legislative framework for the armed forces, particularly the separate discipline Acts for each of the three services, with a single tri-service Act. The work on this will provide a further opportunity to consider whether changes are required to the overall system of discipline, including courts martial, but the key consideration will be to ensure that it continues to underpin operational effectiveness.

### Type 42 Destroyers

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the last of the type 42 destroyers is scheduled to be withdrawn from active service. [6983]

**Mr. Ingram:** On current plans, the last type 42 destroyer is scheduled to be withdrawn from active service in 2014.

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what age is the oldest type 42 destroyer still in active service with the Royal Navy. [6982]

**Mr. Ingram:** The oldest type 42 destroyer still in active service with the Royal Navy is the 23-year-old HMS Newcastle, which was commissioned in March 1978.

### Married Quarters Estate

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who decides the priority of need in *(a)* the upgrade programme and *(b)* the routine maintenance programme at the Larkhill married quarters estate. [7371]

**Dr. Moonie:** The assessment of need for routine maintenance is undertaken at Defence Housing Executive (DHE) Area level. In-house teams are advised by our professional establishment works consultants and works services managers in formulating the forward maintenance plan. DHE staff also undertake regular discussions with local families through the Larkhill Resident's Association and through our regular meetings with the Garrison staff.

Assessment of upgrade requirement is undertaken on a DHE regional basis (Larkhill is within DHE South West Region covering all properties west of Andover) by the regional controller and her team. Regional recommendations are then judged by DHE HQ staff against competing priorities across the entire married quarter estate in Great Britain. The services are consulted throughout.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Larkhill married quarters estate is included in the upgrades proposed by Project Allenby. [7363]

**Dr. Moonie:** Project Allenby is a Ministry of Defence Study into the Public Private Partnership (PPP) potential for the redevelopment and maintenance of the MOD estate and the provision of supporting services for garrisons in the Salisbury Plain and Aldershot areas. It does not include the married quarters estate.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the grading of dwellings in the Larkhill married quarters estate is. [7364]

**Dr. Moonie:** The condition of married quarters is assessed against the criteria of standards, one to four. At present the core long-term estate at Larkhill has 67 properties at standard 1 for condition, 314 at standard 2, 142 at standard 3 and 49 at standard 4.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the planned maintenance programme for the defence married quarters estate includes provision for *(a)* gutters, *(b)* downpipes, *(c)* underground pipes, *(d)* drain covers and *(e)* garden fences; and if he will make a statement. [7366]

**Dr. Moonie:** Planned maintenance programmes extend to 10 years and with the help of Establishment Works Consultants and Works Services Managers, Defence Housing Executive's property managers determine comprehensive schedules of work. These items are then categorised for relative priority against other maintenance requirements (with health and safety issues given highest priority). If gutters, downpipes, underground pipes, drain covers and garden fences, among other items, are not assessed as requiring attention for health and safety reasons they will not necessarily attract high priority although they will be included in planned maintenance programmes for the future.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on *(a)* the budget and *(b)* the management of the planned maintenance programme for the married quarters estate. [7368]

**Dr. Moonie:** DHE's overall works budget of £155 million in 2001–02 is negotiated within the Department's overall process for future planning and resource allocation. Funds are bid for against (a) upgrade projects and (b) planned and response repairs. DHE's Areas and Regions produce planned maintenance programmes for a minimum of three years ahead and funds secured are delegated to Regions and thence the Areas according to a number of factors including numbers and condition of properties and levels of statutory and mandatory work. Area Property Managers manage expenditure using the services of a commercially contracted Works Services Management company. However, upgrade funding is managed from defence Housing Executive HQ and delegated with final approval of upgrade projects.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason the target for completion of the married quarters upgrade programme has been made 2005. [7370]

**Dr. Moonie:** In 1996, its first year of operation, the Defence Housing Executive (DHE) estimated that the upgrade programme could be completed by 2003, subject to a full housing survey. The subsequent survey, completed in 1998, revealed that the extent of the work required was considerably more than originally estimated. It was therefore agreed that DHE would be set an achievable but challenging key target of achieving Standard 1 for Condition for core properties by November 2005. This target has been in place since 1998–99.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he expects the married quarters upgrade programme to be completed by the end of 2005. [7369]

**Dr. Moonie:** The programme to upgrade core family quarters stock should be substantially complete by November 2005.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the budget for *(a)* property refurbishment and *(b)* property maintenance in the Larkhill married quarters estate for (i) 2000, (ii) 2001 and (iii) 2002. [7365]

**Dr. Moonie:** The budgets for refurbishment and property maintenance are managed on a much wider geographical basis to provide flexibility and assessment of relative priorities. Funding in support of Larkhill is managed within the Defence Housing Executive area 6 budget, which is detailed below:

*£ million*

| *Financial year* | *Property maintenance* |
|---|---|
| 2000–01 | 6.523 |
| 2001–02 | 6.072 |
| 2002–03 | [1] — |

[1] not yet known

£285,000 has been made available within this period for refurbishment work in Larkhill.

Area 6 also includes housing at Wilton, Boscombe Down, Winterbourne Gunner, Upavon, Netheravon, West Moors, Bovington, Middle Wallop, Blandford, Lulworth, Andover and Salisbury.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the relationship is between the functions of *(a)* the Larkhill Garrison Commander, *(b)* area 6 of the Defence Housing Executive, *(c)* EWC Ltd., *(d)* Atkins Ltd. and *(e)* Turners Ltd. [7372]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Larkhill garrison commander has overall responsibility for the operational effectiveness of his garrison. The Defence Housing Executive area 6 team have responsibility for the management of the married quarter estate and undertake regular consultations with the garrison and families.

The DHE area team are supported by professional establishment works consultants (EWC-Carillion Services Ltd.), which provides an independent assessment of the services provided by our current works services manager (WSM)—W S Atkins Ltd.

W S Atkins Ltd. will be replaced by Turners Ltd. in January 2002 as our works services manager for DHE area 6. The role of the WSM is to provide and manage all works requirements in support of the married quarters estate.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what money is budgeted in *(a)* 2001 and *(b)* 2002 for (i) refurbishment and (ii) maintenance of the married quarters estate within Larkhill garrison as a result of the arrival of 19 Regiment RA; how many homes will be improved; at what locations; and by what dates. [7362]

**Dr. Moonie:** In the current financial year 2001–02, an additional £240,000 has been allocated to make ready some 180 houses for the arrival of 19 Regiment. Improvements will include general internal redecoration and re-carpeting. Where necessary, some minor alterations to kitchens will also be undertaken. The houses are located throughout the Larkhill estate. Completion of this programme is planned for March 2002.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if annual checks on all hot water and central heating boilers required under health and safety legislation have been completed this year in all service married quarters. [7367]

**Dr. Moonie:** The annual gas safety inspection tests are carried out on a rolling programme over the year. Nationally, the Defence Housing Executive has

approximately 45,000 properties requiring a test, which means that on average some 3,750 properties are inspected each month. The latest figures available, for August 2001, indicate that 529 properties were overdue for testing. This is due to problems with gaining access to carry out the necessary inspections. The figure tends to vary over the year due to factors such as holiday seasons or during military operations when families left behind often take the opportunity to visit relatives.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when work will commence to upgrade the roads at the former married quarters estate at Boscombe Down; and if he will make a statement. [7374]

**Dr. Moonie:** Legal agreement with adjoining house owners is near completion and the Ministry of Defence is currently seeking, in conjunction with Amesbury town council, to resolve an outstanding issue of grass verge/village green elements of the estate owned by a third party. Construction is expected to commence mid 2002.

### Menwith Hill and Fylingdales

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what defence role in the security of the United Kingdom is played by *(a)* Menwith Hill and *(b)* Fylingdales; and if he will make a statement. [7173]

**Mr. Ingram:** RAF Menwith Hill is an integral part of the world-wide US Department of Defence communications network, which supports UK, US and NATO interests. RAF Menwith Hill is also the site for the European Relay Ground Station, which is part of the US Space Based Infra-Red System (SBIRS). SBIRS will be a world-wide satellite based system designed to provide early warning of ballistic missile launch. It will replace the ageing US Defence Support Programme (DSP) satellite system, which has for some years contributed to the security of the UK and NATO. Information on detailed operations at the base is withheld under Exemption 1 (Defence, Security and International Relations) of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

RAF Fylingdales provides the UK with early warning of ballistic missile attack against the UK and Western Europe, and the US with early warning for North America.

### Widows' Pensions

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will amend the rules governing the entitlement to benefit of widows of retired servicemen to allow them to receive pension in respect of service prior to 1978. [6525]

**Mr. Ingram:** The Government have no plans to increase the current Armed Forces Pension Scheme provisions for post retirement widows. Following longstanding practice, improvements to the armed forces and other Public Sector pension schemes do not apply retrospectively.

### Air Squadrons

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which UK air squadrons are at full complement; what proportion this represents of the total; and if he will make a statement. [6957]

**Mr. Ingram:** I have assumed this question relates to pilots and navigators only. As at early October 2001, 19 squadrons out of a total of 72 were at full complement. This represents 26 per cent. of the total. In total, 40 squadrons (56 per cent.) were manned at 90 per cent. or better. The shortfall in aircrew is a well-recognised problem and the Ministry of Defence is taking a number of measures to address.

The squadrons at full complement are: 3, 8, 78, 84, 99, 201, 654, 655, 656, 663, 664, 665, 669, 771, 801, 820, 845, 846, 849.

As well as these, the following squadrons are manned at 90–99 per cent.: 1, 4, 13, 14, 22, 23, 32, 39, 47, 51, 54, 70, 101, 202, 206, 216, 662, 702, 815, 819, 848.

### Canal Zone Campaign

**Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress on the establishment of a medal for those who served in the Canal Zone campaign 1951–54. [7174]

**Dr. Moonie:** There are no plans to institute a medal to recognise service in the Suez Canal Zone during the period 1951 to 1954. The matter was reviewed in 1998 by the then Minister for the armed forces who found no evidence that he believed would enable him to persuade the Committee on the Grant of Honours Decorations and Medals to overturn their policy of non-retrospection, or to revoke any of the decisions made at the time or following various departmental reviews since 1990. No such evidence has since come to light.

### Refurbishment Projects

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by his Department in (i) the current and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6596]

**Dr. Moonie:** Officials in the Ministry of Defence are currently co-ordinating the information requested. I will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of his Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7231]

**Dr. Moonie:** Ministry of Defence employees work in some 200 grades which are grouped together into five bands for pay, promotion and career development purposes. Normal retirement age is dependant upon grade, and an extract from MOD's Personnel Manual follows which lists them. About two-thirds of the work force, mainly those in support, technical and industrial grades, can retire at 60 but have the option to work to age 65.

The balance, mainly managerial and professional grades, have a normal retirement age of 60. Like all Departments, we are reviewing our age retirement policy in accordance with the Government's policy of expanding the opportunities for older people in the work place.

*Normal retirement ages*

| Grade | Pay band | NRA |
|---|---|---|
| Assistant Information Officer | R | 65 |
| Admin Assistant | E2 | 65 |
| Academic Professor of Music | R | 60 |
| Assistant Chief Constable Police | R | 60 |
| Air Ops Officer | D | 65 |
| Admin Officer | E1 | 65 |
| Area Education Officer | R | 60 |
| Accommodation Services Accountant | E1 | 65 |
| Assistant Scientific Officer | E1 | 60 |
| Assistant Librarian | D | 65 |
| Assistant Statistician | D | 60 |
| Assistant Telecommunications Technical Officer | R | 65 |
| British Frontier Guard 2 (Customs and Immigration) | R | 65 |
| British Frontier Guard 3 (Customs and Immigration) | R | 65 |
| British Frontier Guard 4 (Customs and Immigration) | R | 65 |
| Chief Inspector Police | R | 60 |
| Chief Police Adviser (BAOR) | R | 65 |
| Chief Superintendent Police | R | 60 |
| Captain of the Queen's Flight | R | 65 |
| Career Adviser | R | 60 |
| Civilian Accommodation Services Officer | D | 63 |
| Chief Constable Police | R | 60 |
| Chief Civilian Nursing Officer | R | 60 |
| Civilian Dental Practitioner | R | 65 |
| Chief Fire Service Officer | R | 65 |
| Chief Superintendent of Police (SBA) | R | 65 |
| Chief Typing Manager | C2 | 60 |
| Chaplains Assistant | D | 65 |
| Chef 1/Chief Cook 1 | R | 65 |
| Chef 2/Chief Cook 2 | R | 65 |
| Civilian Medical Practitioner | R | 65 |
| Communications Officer 1 | C2 | 65 |
| Communications Officer 2 | D | 65 |
| Communications Officer 3 | E1 | 65 |
| Communications Officer 4 | E2 | 65 |
| Conservation Officer F | D | 65 |
| Constable | R | 60 |
| Co-ordinator Anglo-American Relations | R | 65 |
| Chief of Police (SBA) | R | 65 |
| Community Relations Adviser | D | 65 |
| Civilian Security Officer 1 | C1 | 65 |
| Civilian Security Officer 2 | C2 | 65 |
| Civilian Security Officer 3 | D | 65 |
| Civilian Security Officer 4 | E1 | 65 |
| Civilian Security Officer 5 | E2 | 65 |
| Catering Manager 3 | R | 65 |
| Curatorial Officer C | C1 | 65 |
| Curatorial Officer D | C1 | 65 |
| Curatorial Officer E | C2 | 65 |
| Curatorial Officer F | D | 65 |
| Curatorial Officer G | E1 | 65 |
| Deputy Area Officer Social Worker | R | 60 |
| D Con 2 SCEA | R | 60 |
| Director of Patents | R | 60 |
| Director of Studies | R | 60 |
| Deputy Chief Constable Police | R | 60 |
| Deputy Chief of Police (SBA) | R | 65 |
| Deputy Director of Studies | R | 60 |
| Defence Courier | R | 65 |
| Educational Psychologist | R | 60 |
| Executive Officer | D | 60 |
| Estate Warden | E1 | 65 |
| Families Officer | D | 65 |
| Fiscal Officer (SBA) | R | 65 |
| Fire Service Officer 1 | R | 65 |
| Fire Service Officer 2 | R | 65 |
| Fire Service Officer 3 | R | 65 |
| General Education Adviser | R | 60 |
| Graphics Officer | D | 60 |

*Normal retirement ages*

| Grade | Pay band | NRA |
|---|---|---|
| Graphics Technical Grade | E1 | 60 |
| G6/A DIR DIS | B1 | 60 |
| G6/A PROF SG | B1 | 60 |
| G6/ACCHO | B1 | 60 |
| G6/CIO(B) | B1 | 60 |
| G6/CMRO | B1 | 60 |
| G6/CSALMO | B1 | 60 |
| G6/HP | B1 | 60 |
| G6/P&T SUPG | B1 | 60 |
| G6/S PRIN LB | B1 | 65 |
| G6/SNR P PSY | R | 60 |
| G6/SNR PRIN | B1 | 60 |
| G6/SPSO | B1 | 60 |
| G6/STATISTN | B1 | 60 |
| G7/ECON ADVR | B2 | 60 |
| G7/HD HIST B | B2 | 65 |
| G7/HP | B2 | 60 |
| G7/P GRAPH O | B2 | 60 |
| G7/P INF OFR | B2 | 65 |
| G7/P LEC S/G | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PCHO | B2 | 60 |
| G7/Principal Intelligence Officer | B2 | 65 |
| G7/Principal Intelligence Officer (Army) | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PMRO | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PMSO | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PPTO | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PRIN LIBN | B2 | 65 |
| G7/PRIN PSY | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PRINCIPAL | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PRN INV O | B2 | 65 |
| G7/PRO | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PSALMO | B2 | 60 |
| G7/PSO | B2 | 60 |
| G7/STATISTN | B2 | 60 |
| Higher Executive Officer | C2 | 60 |
| Higher Executive Officer (D) | C2 | 60 |
| Higher Graphics Officer | C2 | 60 |
| Higher Instructional Officer | C2 | 65 |
| Higher Psychologist | C2 | 60 |
| Higher Intelligence Officer | C2 | 65 |
| Historian 2 | R | 65 |
| Higher Linguist Officer | C2 | 65 |
| Higher Mapping and Charting Officer | C2 | 60 |
| House Parent | R | 60 |
| Higher Professional Photographer | C2 | 60 |
| HPTO | C2 | 60 |
| HPTO(D) | R | 60 |
| HPTO/HSO (HP) | R | 60 |
| House Matron | R | 60 |
| Higher Scientific Officer | C2 | 60 |
| Higher Scientific Officer (D) | R | 60 |
| Higher Telecommunications Technical Officer | C2 | 65 |
| Instrumental Professor of Music | R | 60 |
| Information Officer | R | 65 |
| Instructional Officer 1 | D | 65 |
| Instructional Officer 2 | D | 65 |
| Inspector Police | R | 60 |
| Investigating Officer 1 | R | 65 |
| Investigating Officer 2 | R | 65 |
| Information Officer 1 (Army) | R | 60 |
| Information Officer 2 (Army) | R | 60 |
| Judge (SBA) | R | 65 |
| Legal Adviser (SBA) | R | 65 |
| Lecturer D/S | R | 60 |
| Legal Adviser (BAOR) | R | 65 |
| Legal Aid Officer | R | 60 |
| Librarian | C2 | 65 |
| Linguist Officer | R | 65 |
| Manager RNFC | R | 65 |
| Mapping and Charting Officer | D | 60 |
| Mapping and Charting Tech Grade 1 | E1 | 65 |
| Mapping and Charting Tech Grade 2 | E2 | 65 |
| Mess Manager A | R | 65 |
| Mess Manager B | R | 65 |
| MLSO 1 | R | 65 |
| MLSO 2 | R | 65 |

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*Normal retirement ages*

| Grade | Pay band | NRA |
|---|---|---|
| Medical Officer | R | 60 |
| Museum Support Grade 1 | D | 65 |
| Museum Support Grade 2 | D | 65 |
| Museum Support Grade 3 | E1 | 65 |
| Museum Support Grade 4 | E1 | 65 |
| Museum Support Grade 5 | E2 | 65 |
| Marine Services Officer 1 | R | 60 |
| Marine Services Officer 2 | R | 60 |
| Marine Services Officer 3 | R | 60 |
| Marine Services Officer 4 | R | 60 |
| Museum Technician 2 | D | 65 |
| Museum Technician 3 | D | 65 |
| Naval Regional Officer | R | 65 |
| P&GS A | R | 60 |
| P&GS B | R | 60 |
| P&GS C | R | 60 |
| P&GS D | R | 60 |
| P&GS E | R | 60 |
| Principal Lect RMAS/BRNC | R | 60 |
| Principal Patent Officer | R | 60 |
| Patent Officer | R | 60 |
| Principal Health and Safety Officer | R | 60 |
| Principal Linguist Officer | R | 65 |
| Principal Medical Officer | R | 60 |
| Police Adviser (BAOR) | R | 65 |
| Professional Photographer | D | 60 |
| Personal Secretary | E1 | 65 |
| PTO | D | 60 |
| PTO 4 | D | 65 |
| Radio Officer | D | 65 |
| Record Reviewer | R | 65 |
| Reviser SDS | R | 65 |
| RO(Prin) | R | 65 |
| RO1 | R | 65 |
| RO2 | R | 65 |
| RO3 | R | 65 |
| Research Officer (R&P) | R | 60 |
| Senior Career Adviser 6 | R | 60 |
| Senior Civil Servants (formerly Grades 1–5) | R | 60 |
| Senior Educational Psychologist | R | 60 |
| Senior Information Officer | R | 65 |
| Senior Inspector Adviser | R | 60 |
| Senior Lect D/S | R | 60 |
| Senior Lect S/G | R | 60 |
| Senior Patent Officer | R | 60 |
| Salvage and Mooring Officer (SALMO) | R | 65 |
| School Catering Adviser | R | 60 |
| Senior Instructional Officer | C1 | 65 |
| Senior Investigating Officer | R | 65 |
| Senior Librarian | C1 | 65 |
| Senior Executive Officer | C1 | 60 |
| Senior Executive Officer (COMMS) | C1 | 60 |
| Senior Fire Service Officer | R | 65 |
| SGB 1 | E1 | 65 |
| SGB 2 | E2 | 65 |
| Shore Galley Design and Equip Adv | C1 | 65 |
| Senior Graphics Officer | C1 | 60 |
| Sergeant Police | R | 60 |
| Senior Health and Safety Officer | R | 60 |
| Senior Intelligence Officer | C1 | 65 |
| Senior Intelligence Officer (Army) | R | 60 |
| Senior Linguist Officer | C1 | 65 |
| Support Manager 1 | C2 | 60 |
| Support Manager 2 | D | 60 |
| Support Manager 3 | D | 65 |
| Senior Mapping and Charting Officer | C1 | 60 |
| Senior Medical Officer | R | 60 |
| Senior A/Statistician | C2 | 60 |
| Senior Economic Assistant | C2 | 60 |
| Senior Lecturer SR | R | 60 |
| Senior Photographer | C1 | 60 |
| Senior Psychologist | C1 | 60 |
| Senior Social Worker | R | 60 |
| Scientific Officer | D | 60 |
| Social Worker | R | 60 |
| SOG A | C1 | 60 |

*Normal retirement ages*

| Grade | Pay band | NRA |
|---|---|---|
| SOG B | C2 | 60 |
| SOG C | D | 60 |
| SOG D | D | 60 |
| Senior Professional Photographer | C1 | 60 |
| Senior Personal Secretary | D | 60 |
| SPTO | C1 | 60 |
| SPTO/SSO(HP) | C1 | 60 |
| Senior Research Officer | C1 | 60 |
| Senior Scientific Officer | C1 | 60 |
| Station Warden | E1 | 65 |
| Senior Telecommunication Technical Officer | C1 | 65 |
| Subject Adviser | R | 60 |
| Supervising Traffic Rep | R | 65 |
| Superintendent Police | R | 60 |
| Supervising Radio Officer | C2 | 60 |
| Tech Grade 1 | E1 | 65 |
| Tech Grade 2 | E2 | 65 |
| Traffic Rep | R | 65 |
| Telecommunications Technical Officer | D | 65 |
| Typing Manager | D | 65 |
| Typist | E2 | 65 |
| Vet Officer | R | 60 |
| All Industrial grades | R | 65 |

## Anti-armour Weapon Programme

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what the value of the British Army next generation anti-armour weapon contract is; when the tender closing date is; when the contract start and completion dates are; and if he will make a statement; [7180]

(2) if he will list the companies which have bid for the British Army next generation anti-armour weapon, indicating which ones are United Kingdom only companies; and if he will make a statement. [7181]

**Dr. Moonie:** This is a matter for the Chief Executive of the Defence Procurement Agency. I have asked the Chief Executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Robert Walmsley to Mr. Mike Hancock, dated 15 October 2001:*

I am replying to your questions to the Secretary of State for Defence on the British Army's next generation anti-armour weapon programme. The programme to which you refer is the Next Generation Light anti-Armour Weapon, known as NLAW. These matters fall within my area of responsibility as Chief of Defence Procurement and Chief Executive of the Defence Procurement Agency.

The companies which have submitted bids to meet this requirement, are SAAB Bofors Dynamics AB and Matra BAe Dynamics (UK) Ltd. Neither are wholly UK owned companies, however, Matra BAe Dynamics (UK) Ltd. is a UK registered company jointly owned by BAE Systems and EADs. BAE Systems also have a shareholding in SAAB Bofors Dynamics parent company.

The final cost of the NLAW contract is subject to negotiation, but it is expected to be in the order of £400m. The tender closing date was 21 September 2001 and it is anticipated that the contract will be let next year. The contract could run for up to 25 years, if all the in-service support options are selected, but it is expected that the Development and Production elements will be complete by 2009.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when MBT-Law UK's British Next Generation anti-armour weapon will be ready for service; what the projected cost of this contract is; and if he will make a statement. [7340]

**Dr. Moonie:** MBT-LAW is one of the competitors to meet the Next Generation Light anti-armour weapon (NLAW) requirement. The preferred bidder will be announced next year, and a contract let shortly afterwards. We currently anticipate this system being ready for service in 2006–07. The final cost of the NLAW contract is subject to negotiation but it is expected to be in the order of £400 million.

### Australian Bushmaster

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to purchase Australian Bushmaster infantry mobility vehicles; and if he will make a statement. [7243]

**Dr. Moonie:** This is a matter for the Chief Executive of the Defence Procurement Agency. I have asked the Chief Executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Robert Walmsley to Mr. Mike Hancock, dated 15 October 2001:*

I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to purchase the Australian Bushmaster infantry mobility vehicles. This matter falls within my area of responsibility as Chief of Defence Procurement and Chief Executive of the Defence Procurement Agency.

The Australian Bushmaster infantry mobility vehicle was a contender for the Future Command and Liaison Vehicle programme, but the manufacturer withdrew the vehicle during the concept stage of the project in 2000. As a result there are no current plans to purchase the Bushmaster vehicle.

### Northern Ireland

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers have *(a)* died and *(b)* been injured as a result of firearms discharged on army property since the IRA ceasefire; on what dates; what the results were of (i) internal investigations and (ii) coroner's inquests in each case; where other soldiers were involved, what disciplinary measures were taken; where papers were passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions, how long he took to reach a decision on prosecution and what the result was. [7082]

**Mr. Ingram:** There were no deaths or injuries in 1994 as a result of firearms discharged on Army property in Northern Ireland since the IRA ceasefire of 31 August.

In 1995 there were three deaths which occurred on 21 June, 13 September and 25 September. The Coroner's verdict was that each soldier died as a result of a gunshot wound to the head. One injury occurred on 26 December. It is not normal practice to comment on the result of internal investigations or any resultant disciplinary action as this is a personal matter for the parties involved. However, I can confirm that one other soldier was involved in this injury and the matter was resolved under military jurisdiction. No papers were passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In 1996 one death occurred on 20 July. The Coroner's verdict stated that the death was consistent with a bullet wound to the chest. There were no injuries in that year. It is not normal practice to comment on the result of internal investigations. No papers were passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

There was one death in 1997 which occurred on 3 September. The verdict of the Coroner was that death was consistent with a bullet wound to the chest. There were also two injuries that year. These occurred on 9 and 16 August. It is not normal practice to comment on the result of internal investigations or any resultant disciplinary action as this is a personal matter for the parties involved. However, I can confirm that two soldiers were questioned regarding the incident on 9 August under military jurisdiction. No papers were passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

There were no deaths or injuries in 1998.

In 1999 there were no injuries but one death occurred on 23 November. The circumstances surrounding the death have yet to be heard in the Coroner's Court. It is not normal practice to comment on the result of internal investigations. No papers were passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

There were no deaths or injuries in 2000.

Up until 31 September 2001 two deaths were recorded. These were on 25 January and 30 July. The circumstances surrounding the first death is under consideration by the Director of Public Prosecutions and both deaths are awaiting a Coroner's Inquest. It is not normal practice to comment on the result of internal investigations. There were no injuries during that period.

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish, for every year since the first paramilitary ceasefires for which it is possible *(a)* figures on the frequency and duration of (i) military and (ii) other helicopter flights, *(b)* the number of civilian complaints and amount of compensation paid during this period in relation to such flights and *(c)* the steps taken to scale down military presence according to perceived terrorist threat; and if he will set out the means by which he informs himself of the nature and purpose of each helicopter flight and monitors the progressive reduction of flights. [7084]

**Mr. Ingram:** As Minister for the Armed Forces I can reply only on military aircraft. Records of individual military flights in the Province are not maintained but are recorded in flying hours and are shown in the table:

| *Dates* | *Flying hours* |
|---|---|
| 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995 | 31,289 |
| 1 April 1995 to 31 March 1996 | 27,827 |
| 1 April 1996 to 31 March 1997 | 28,088 |
| 1 April 1997 to 31 March 1998 | 28,772 |
| 1 April 1998 to 31 March 1999 | 24,620 |
| 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000 | 24,734 |
| 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001 | 25,717 |
| 1 April 2001 to 31 August 2001 | 11,324 |

Compensation is paid out during the financial year and the figures shown in the following table relate to the cases that were settled during that year:

| *Dates* | *Compensation paid (£)* |
|---|---|
| 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995 | 6,365,380 |
| 1 April 1995 to 31 March 1996 | 1,726,693 |
| 1 April 1996 to 31 March 1997 | 645,260 |
| 1 April 1997 to 31 March 1998 | 903,350 |
| 1 April 1998 to 31 March 1999 | 880,040 |

| Dates | Compensation paid (£) |
|---|---|
| 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000 | 1,005,648 |
| 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001 | 922,671 |
| 1 April 2001 to 31 August 2001 | 216,404 |

Formal records on complaints about military helicopters were not kept until the beginning of 1997. They are recorded by calendar year and are set out as follows:

| Year | Complaints |
|---|---|
| 1 January 1997 to 31 December 1997 | [1]647 |
| 1 January 1998 to 31 December 1998 | 511 |
| 1 January 1999 to 31 December 1999 | 439 |
| 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2000 | 553 |
| 1 January 2001 to 31 August 2001 | 288 |

[1] This figure differs from that which was given on 3 November 1998, *Official Report*, column 442W. It has become clear that, due to the wide variety of agencies dealing with helicopter complaints, there was an element of duplication in the figures provided earlier. The number of complaints has been revised to take account of this.

Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement a number of steps have been taken to scale down the level of helicopter activity. Since March 1999 Chinook and Sea King helicopters have been rear based on the Mainland. The operational profile has been altered to minimise intrusion, which includes operating at greater altitudes to reduce noise and modifying approach paths to avoid built-up area where topography and weather conditions permit. Also no helicopters are flown between 2300 hours and 0600 hours, except when operationally essential.

The General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland keeps the use of helicopters constantly under review and steps are taken, where possible, to reduce the helicopter profile. However, this is dependent on the security situation and the threat posed by terrorists. As can be seen from the table on flying hours there has been an increase in the year 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001 which can be attributed to the increased terrorist threat from Dissident Republicans.

### Independent Assessor of Military Complaints

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has made to the 8th annual report of the Independent Assessor of Military Complaints with particular reference to the recommendations of the report *(a)* to take steps to reduce the number of complaints about helicopters and to make pilots aware of the costs of compensation claims, *(b)* to carry out an independent evaluation of community awareness training and *(c)* to take steps to promote the informal resolution of complaints. [7083]

**Mr. Ingram:** The Independent Assessor of Military Complaints submits his report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland as required by Section 98 and Schedule 11 to the Terrorism Act 2000. In the last couple of his reports the Independent Assessor has concentrated on helicopter complaints which is understandable given the continued need for the use of helicopters owing to the terrorist threat from Dissident Republicans.

The Ministry of Defence values the views of the Independent Assessor and has taken on board the three recommendations he made in his latest Report. Details of compensation awards as a result of helicopter activity are now sent to the Commander of the Joint Helicopter Force (Northern Ireland) so that pilots can be made aware of the financial impact their actions can have. Headquarters Northern Ireland (HQNI) are also considering how best the Community Awareness Training might be evaluated by an independent body and are looking at a number of agencies that may be able to carry out this task. The emphasis on informal resolution of complaints remains a priority for HQNI and they continue to work closely with the Civil Representatives from the Northern Ireland Office in achieving this goal.

### HMS Dryad

**Mr. Oaten:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of HMS Dryad. [6572]

**Mr. Ingram:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 334–5W, to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Helen Jones) in which I advised the House that, in parallel with the work on the Defence Training Review, the Naval Recruiting and Training Agency had conducted a comprehensive review of its training estate. As a result, work has been started on the development of the Integrated Maritime Warfare School at HMS Collingwood, in Fareham, which will deliver maritime warfare training from a single site and encompass the warfare training currently undertaken at HMS Dryad. Under this programme, as I advised the House at the time, HMS Dryad will become surplus to requirements.

The target date for closure is no later than 2011, but it is planned to transfer elements of training from HMS Dryad to HMS Collingwood progressively over the next few years, with a view to achieving an earlier closure if possible. This will help us to maximise the operational and financial benefits from the Naval Recruiting and Training Agency's estate rationalisation programme. While the closure of Dryad is expected to result in a reduction of some 70 Service and 40 MOD civilian posts in the NRTA, this will be more than offset by the proposed move of elements of Fleet to HMS Excellent, which will take place before the closure of HMS Dryad. Taken together these two proposals are expected to produce a net increase of about 25 Service and 60 civilian posts in the Portsmouth area.

Detailed proposals for all the above measures will be subject to normal consultative procedures at the appropriate time.

### Kursk

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost to the United Kingdom has been of helping to raise the Russian submarine Kursk; and if he will make a statement. [7185]

**Mr. Hoon:** There has been no United Kingdom Government involvement in the Kursk recovery operation and therefore no costs have arisen.

### QinetiQ

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of QinetiQ's research and development projects will be focused on *(a)* defence

technologies, *(b)* telecommunications, *(c)* health care and *(d)* non defence related technologies; and if he will make a statement. [7335]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Ministry of Defence research contracts currently account for 35 per cent. of QinetiQ's income. A further 44 per cent. of QinetiQ's income comes from other non-research work such as project support work for the Defence Procurement Agency and technical advice to the operational commands. The balance of QinetiQ's income is from non-MOD sources including commercial customers. It would not be in the commercial interests of the company, or the Government as future vendor, to release detailed financial information at this stage in the PPP process.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much QinetiQ's new medium wave infra-red telescope cost to produce; and if he will make a statement. [7322]

**Dr. Moonie:** The medium-wave infra-red telescope is part of a Ministry of Defence research programme begun in the early 1990s designed to understand the phenomenology of aircraft infra-red signatures and investigate detector technologies. The telescope is owned by the MOD and operated by QinetiQ.

It is not our practice to release costs of individual research programmes as this may allow a detailed picture to be built up of the UK's defence research priorities and future defence capabilities. I am accordingly withholding the information requested under Exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information relating to defence, security and international relations.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much QinetiQ's new submarine research and technology centre cost to build; what alternative sites were explored; and if he will make a statement. [7341]

**Dr. Moonie:** The centre cost in the order of £462,000 to set up and was formed by co-locating existing research capabilities, facilities and equipment from QinetiQ laboratories at Winfrith and Bincleaves into one building on the Winfrith site. The figure does not include the past investment in equipment which has been co-located.

Several possible sites around the south coast area in Dorset were explored. The eventual decision reflected the most cost effective solution, and minimised disruption and inconvenience to staff.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the US State Department has given its approval to amend the manufacturing licence for the UK Apache Attack Helicopter to enable QinetiQ to access US proprietary data. [5860]

**Dr. Moonie:** The US State Department gave its approval on 1 October 2001.

### RAF Chilmark

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to dispose of the former RAF Chilmark site; and if he will make a statement. [7375]

**Dr. Moonie:** Much of RAF Chilmark including outlying areas has now been sold. Part of the remaining area is of high conservation and wildlife value, and a trust consisting of the local authorities and interest groups has been constituted with a view to buying and managing the site. The Ministry of Defence is in discussion with representatives of the trust, and it is hoped that terms for a sale to take place during 2002 can be agreed shortly.

The remainder of the site, which the trust does not intend to purchase, still requires clearance of explosive ordnance residues. A decision on the disposal of this final part will be made once the extent of residual contamination has been determined.

### Hunting Plc

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the *(a)* total cost, *(b)* life span and *(c)* cost to his Department of each contract with Hunting PCC in the past five years; and if he will make a statement. [7193]

**Dr. Moonie:** Hunting PCC is not recognised as a Ministry of Defence supplier; it is assumed that the question is referring to Hunting plc and information is provided on that basis. Data at the level requested are not routinely held and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I am, however, able to advise that during the past five years 130 contracts with a total value of just over £430 million have been placed with Hunting plc by the Ministry of Defence.

### Indian Armed Forces (Training)

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of India's armed forces have been in the UK for training over the last four years; what the cost to his Department has been; and if he will make a statement. [7196]

**Mr. Ingram:** During the period 1 September 1997 to 31 August 2001, 24 officers of India's armed forces were trained in the UK at a cost to the Ministry of Defence Fund of £317,822.59. The officers attended courses at the Royal College of Defence Studies, the Joint Services Command and Staff College, the Royal Military College of Science and the Royal Defence Medical College.

### Overseas Procurement Contracts

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what support his Department has given to United Kingdom-based companies bidding for the New Zealand MoD contract for light armoured vehicles; and if he will make a statement. [7186]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Defence Export Services Organisation in MOD provided general marketing advice to a number of UK companies which were interested in the New Zealand requirement.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which United Kingdom companies his Department supported in a bid for the Polish MoD contract for a new 8x8 wheeled armoured carrier; and if he will make a statement. [7184]

**Dr. Moonie:** To date the Ministry of Defence has not been approached by British companies for support in connection with the Polish requirement. Should we be asked to provide assistance in the future, we would of

course respond as positively as possible, in line with the Government support for UK defence industry and legitimate defence exports.

### Stevens Inquiry

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many former members of the Force Research Unit *(a)* have been interviewed by the Stevens Inquiry team, *(b)* have refused to be interviewed and *(c)* are prevented from being interviewed by (i) legal and (ii) other impediments. [7115]

**Mr. Ingram:** The Ministry of Defence is fully supportive of the Stevens Inquiry and will continue to provide it with whatever assistance it can. It would, however, be inappropriate for me to comment further on an ongoing police inquiry.

### Departmental Properties

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by his Department, including and distinguishing between the Department itself, its next step agencies and its non-departmental public bodies, differentiating between purchases made as a result of the creation of new bodies and those purchases made by established bodies. [7811]

**Dr. Moonie:** My officials are currently investigating the information requested. I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Armaments Procurement Contracts

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which armaments procurement contracts, with a value greater than £1 million, will *(a)* go out to tender and *(b)* have contracts signed, in the next financial year; [6954]

(2) if he will list the current armament procurement contracts in respect of which there is a delay in *(a)* delivery date and *(b)* anticipated date of entry into service of more than (i) six months, (ii) one year and (iii) two years; and what additional costs have arisen from such delays. [6955]

**Dr. Moonie:** The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Nuclear Weapons Accident Response Exercises

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many exercises to test procedures for dealing with accidents involving nuclear weapons will be held in 2001; what the *(a)* dates and *(b)* locations are of each of these exercises; what the titles and scenarios are of each of these exercises; and how many of these exercises involve the US Government. [6573]

**Mr. Hoon:** The following table gives the current date, name and location of nuclear weapon accident response exercises for 2001. I am withholding details of the exercise scenarios under Exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. I can confirm that none of the exercises involves US participation.

| *Month* | *Name* | *Location* |
|---|---|---|
| May | NW Convoy Group Standardisation | Lincolnshire |
| June | Exercise Bowline | Coulport |
| July | RAF Station NAR team Standardisation[1] | Wiltshire |
| September | MOD Police Nuclear Weapon Convoy Standardisation | Lincolnshire |
| October | RAF Station NAR team Standardisation[1] | Suffolk |
| October | Bronze Endeavour | Norfolk |
| November | RAF Station NAR team Standardisation[1] | Oxfordshire |
| November | Exercise Senator | Bedfordshire |

[1] RAF Station Nuclear Accident Response (NAR) teams provide immediate response forces for the air transportation of nuclear weapons

### RAF Menwith Hill

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the value is of contracts let in connection with RAF Menwith Hill in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999, *(c)* 2000 and *(d)* 2001; how many such contracts have been let; to whom they have been let; and what percentage of contracts have been let to UK firms. [6259]

**Mr. Ingram:** The value and numbers of contracts let by the Ministry of Defence in connection with RAF Menwith Hill were as follows:

| *Financial years* | *Contracts let* | *Value £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| 1998–99 | 199 | 3,168 |
| 1999–2000 | 313 | 4,747 |
| 2000–01 | 414 | 3,296 |
| 1 April 2001 to 14 September 2001 | 242 | 2,798 |

*Note:*
Figures are exclusive of VAT

Details of individual contracts have been withheld under exemption 14 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information and the names of individual contractors have been withheld under exemption 4e of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. The majority of contracts have been awarded to UK Prime Contractors, but this work may be sub-contracted to UK or other companies.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the complement was of Ministry of Defence police at RAF Menwith Hill on *(a)* 1 January and *(b)* 15 July; and what percentage of the cost of these personnel on each date was met by the US Government. [6258]

**Mr. Ingram:** I am withholding details of the MDP complement (on 1 January 2001 and 15 July 2001) at RAF Menwith Hill in accordance with exemption 1 (defence, security and international relations) of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. I can, however, confirm that staffing levels have been significantly increased in recent months.

The financial arrangements governing the MDP presence at RAF Menwith Hill are covered by a memorandum of understanding between the UK and US Governments. The costs incurred by HMG for the MDP presence at RAF Menwith Hill are reimbursed by the US Government, except where overtime is occasioned by the activities of protesters, which is a direct cost to the UK.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many alleged breaches of security have occurred at RAF Menwith Hill in each year from 1990 to date. [6263]

**Mr. Ingram:** Central records of incursions at RAF Menwith Hill were not kept prior to 1996. Since then, the figures are:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 17 |
| 1997 | 51 |
| 1998 | 30 |
| 1999 | 1 |
| 2000–01 | 1 |

The noticeable drop since 1999 reflects the erection of a perimeter security fence at the site.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many MoD personnel at RAF Menwith Hill are under the operational control of US visiting forces. [6260]

**Mr. Ingram:** As at 1 October 2001, 257 Ministry of Defence personnel employed at RAF Menwith Hill are under the line management of the United States visiting force as part of their day-to-day duties.

### Defence Research and Development Projects

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the projects and European countries involved in collaborating with the MoD on specific defence research and development projects. [7336]

**Dr. Moonie:** Under bilateral or multilateral arrangements relating to research, the Ministry of Defence has significant numbers of joint programmes or information exchanges with the following countries or organisations:

| *Country/organisation* | *Number of programmes* |
|---|---|
| France | 60 |
| Sweden | 28 |
| Netherlands/Norway | 31 |
| Germany | 20 |
| WEAG[1]/EUCLID[2] | 38 |
| Miscellaneous | 10 |

[1] Western European Armaments Group: informal grouping of European Defence Ministers providing policy direction for armaments and research issues.
[2] European Co-operation for the Long-term in Defence (EUCLID) based on competition and contracts placed on lead contractors, usually with some industrial funding.

International research collaboration also takes place under the umbrella of NATO. Details are not included as NATO also includes non-European countries.

Many technologies are involved, including:

Energetic Materials and Plasmas
Structural Materials and Structural Effects Analysis
Sensor Systems
Computer Applications and Information Processing
Design Aspects—Platforms and Weapons
Photonic/Optical Materials and Devices
Electronic and Electrical Devices
Signature Control and Signature Reduction
Computing Technologies
Operating Environmental Issues
Communications and CIS Related Technologies
Integration and other Systems Issues
Guidance and Control Systems (Weapons and Platforms)
Propulsion and Powerplants
Electronic Materials
Manufacturing Processes/Design tools/Techniques.

### Weather Modification Experiments

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on weather modification experiments undertaken on behalf of his Department. [8009]

**Dr. Moonie:** I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Roving Sands Exercise

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Lewes, of 16 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 7W, what scenario was assumed in this year's Roving Sands exercise. [6356]

**Mr. Ingram:** This year, exercise Roving Sands was based on the scenario of a multi-national coalition of air defence assets in a high-intensity conflict.

### RAF Fylingdales

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* UK and *(b)* US (i) military and (ii) civil personnel are deployed at RAF Fylingdales. [6264]

**Mr. Ingram:** As at 5 September 2001, there were 81 UK military, 318 UK civilian, one US military and 10 US civilian personnel deployed at RAF Fylingdales.

### RAF Feltwell

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how he ensures, in the absence of RAF personnel at RAF Feltwell, that the activities undertaken at the base are consistent with the UK national interest. [6261]

**Mr. Ingram:** RAF Feltwell falls within the administrative responsibility of the RAF Commander Lakenheath, who regularly visits the base in the course of his day-to-day duties.

### Fishing (Luce Bay)

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long he expects the ban on fishing extending across Luce Bay in Wigtownshire to remain in place due to unrecovered ordnance left by the RAF after testing procedures. [6087]

**Dr. Moonie:** The area of Luce Bay currently closed to fishing covers approximately 2 square miles. Officials are working with the appropriate authorities to have navigation buoys put in place to mark clearly an area of 0.103 square miles which will be permanently closed to fishing. The work to place the buoys is expected to be completed shortly.

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to agree compensation provisions for fishermen excluded by MOD restriction orders from fishing grounds in Luce Bay, Wigtownshire. [6086]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Ministry of Defence has no special plans to agree compensation provisions for fishermen excluded from the fishing grounds in Luce Bay, Wigtownshire. When compensation claims are submitted, they are considered on the basis of whether or not the Ministry of Defence has a legal liability to pay compensation. Where there is a legal liability to pay compensation, we do so.

One claim for compensation has been received from a fisherman alleging a loss of earnings caused by his exclusion from fishing grounds in Luce Bay. On investigation, it was determined that in excluding this individual from the area for reasons of safety, the range authorities were acting within their legal rights as laid down in the relevant local bye-laws. As a result, liability was denied and no compensation has been paid.

### Dundrennan Range, Kirkcudbrightshire

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are for future capital investment by his Department at Dundrennan Range, Kirkcudbrightshire. [6085]

**Dr. Moonie:** The facilities at Dundrennan are used primarily for infantry training and also offer facilities for ammunition testing. In terms of infantry training, the facilities represent a valuable resource and we wish to maximise their utility. Starting in June next year, a programme of building will commence which will provide training accommodation with supporting infrastructure to house up to 500 personnel and an infantry field firing range complex. There are no plans to develop the ammunition testing facility.

### Strategic Defence Review

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to reduce the size of the *(a)* regular and *(b)* Territorial Army beyond the levels envisaged in the Strategic Defence Review. [6990]

**Mr. Ingram:** Decisions were taken in the Strategic Defence Review about the size and structure of the Army, which included the creation of a sixth deployable brigade and a second line of communication. It is intended to man the Army to achieve this, and it will require an increase in its strength from current levels. The extent of the increase will depend in part on the outcome of on-going studies into the best ways of delivering the military capability required of the Army.

There are no plans to reduce the Territorial Army below the size announced in November 1998.

### Territorial Army

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Territorial Army units are commanded by *(a)* Regular Army and *(b)* Territorial Army officers. [6997]

**Dr. Moonie:** A total of 59 Territorial Army units are commanded by Regular Army officers and 46 are commanded by Territorial Army officers.

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* two-star generals and *(b)* generals above this rank serving in the Army are Territorial Army officers. [6988]

**Dr. Moonie:** There are no two-star generals or generals above this rank currently serving in the Territorial Army.

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the *(a)* establishment and *(b)* actual strength was of the Territorial Army on 1 July. [6993]

**Dr. Moonie:** As at 1 July, the actual strength of the Territorial Army (less non-regular permanent staff) was 40,409, some 800 below the agreed establishment of 41,204.

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which the most undermanned unit is in the Territorial Army, expressed as actual strength as a percentage of establishment strength. [6991]

**Dr. Moonie:** The most undermanned unit in the Territorial Army (TA) is 203 Field Hospital Royal Army Medical Corps (Volunteers). The actual strength of this regiment is currently 59 per cent. of its establishment strength. As the hon. Member may know, there is a general shortfall in numbers in the Army Medical Services (TA) and a recruiting campaign is in place to address this. Numbers are beginning to increase and I expect this trend to continue.

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been realised by the sale of Territorial Army centres since May 1997. [6996]

**Dr. Moonie:** Figures are not available for the period before April 1998. Since that date, some £7 million in receipts has been achieved from the sale of sites used primarily by the Territorial Army, in addition to a receipt in excess of £66 million for the Duke of York's HQ in London. A number of disposals of such sites are still in progress.

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers have been commissioned in the Territorial Army in the last three years. [6994]

**Dr. Moonie:** In the last three years, 2,314 officers have been commissioned into the Territorial Army. This figure excludes non-regular permanent staff.

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers have left the Territorial Army, including those transferring to the long-term reserve list, in the last three years. [6995]

**Dr. Moonie:** In the last three years, 2,663 officers have left the Territorial Army. This figure excludes non-regular permanent staff.

### Royal Navy Reserve

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the strength was of the Royal Naval Reserve on 1 July. [6998]

**Dr. Moonie:** The strength of the Royal Naval Reserve on 1 July 2001 was 3,144.

### Armed Forces

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it remains his policy to maintain a one Army concept for the Regular and Territorial Armies. [6989]

**Dr. Moonie:** We remain fully committed to a TA that is relevant, usable and fully integrated into our armed forces.

### Salisbury Plain Training (Accidents)

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what the result was of the investigation into the cause of the fatal accident to a Challenger II tank on Salisbury Plain on 11 July; [5859]

(2) how many fatal accidents have occurred on Salisbury Plain training estate since 1 January 2000; what vehicles were involved; and what the cause of death was, and which emergency service was first on the scene, in each case. [5858]

**Mr. Ingram:** There have been two fatal accidents on Salisbury Plain training area since 1 January 2000. Private Christopher France died in an accident on 6 April 2000 after being struck by a Pinzgauer vehicle, and Lieutenant Paul Syred and Corporal Michael Paterson were killed in July this year when the Challenger 2 tank in which they were travelling overturned. The police and ambulance services arrived promptly at the scenes of both incidents.

The Ministry of Defence continues to investigate both accidents and I am therefore unable to provide further details at this stage.

### Japanese PoWs

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many compensation applications have been received for former PoWs held by the Japanese under his Department's new scheme; how many have been approved; how many have been rejected; and how many have been upheld after appeal. [7613]

**Dr. Moonie:** As at 9 October 2001, a total of 27,628 claims have been received for payments under the ex-gratia scheme. 22,437 payments have been made, 3,761 claims have been rejected. As the payments are made on an ex-gratia basis, there is no formal right of appeal against rejection. However, the War Pensions Agency will reconsider any claim on receipt of further representations.

### London Weighting

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the total value of London weightings and London living allowances for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [6830]

**Dr. Moonie:** The cost of the various London payments made to service and civilian staff in the Ministry of Defence is £20.3 million. Some 13,300 military and civilian staff are in receipt of such payments.

### Departmental Spending

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the total amount of spending by his Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of his Department's total spending this constitutes; and if he will make a statement. [6833]

**Dr. Moonie:** I regret that data on defence expenditure as a whole are not available by nation and region of the UK and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, I draw the hon. Member's attention to the recently published document, "Defence Statistics 2001", a copy of which is available in the Library. Table 1.9 contains data on defence expenditure on equipment by region and nation.

### Departmental Properties

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the total annual running costs for buildings used, owned or rented by his Department for each nation and region of the UK, and estimate the average cost per square metre for properties used by his Department as a whole, and by region and nation of the UK. [6831]

**Dr. Moonie:** Decisions about the Ministry of Defence use of buildings are not made primarily on the basis of cost. Operational and other factors also play a part. Running costs for MOD buildings are not as present held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, with the publication of "In Trust and On Trust: A Strategy for the Defence Estate" in June 2000, MOD has begun to establish a basis on which such information can be more easily collected and assessed. This process may, however, take some time to complete to the level of detail requested.

### Legal Services

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the numbers of qualified lawyers and support staff in each of the armed services' legal departments, identifying where possible those concerned with courts martials, in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 2000. [7402]

**Mr. Ingram:** The employment of qualified lawyers and support staff in the armed forces, and the organisation of the individual service legal branches, varies greatly.

The Naval Service—the number of qualified lawyers in the Royal Navy for the years requested are:

| *Year* | *Qualified lawyers* |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 29 |
| 1990 | 29 |
| 2000 | 33 |

The Royal Navy does not have a dedicated legal branch. Instead, qualified naval barristers are employed in legal posts throughout the service. In the year 2000, there were 21 legal posts of which 17 were filled by barristers. The remaining 16 lawyers will have been employed in normal naval duties afloat and ashore. Unfortunately, no such statistics exist for the years 1980 and 1990. It is estimated that between one third and one half of the qualified legal personnel will have been involved in court martial proceedings as a part of their duties.

As the naval service does not possess a dedicated legal department, there are no dedicated support staff. It is estimated that about 12 senior and junior RN ratings would have supported the various naval barristers whose work included court martial proceedings. In 1996, a dedicated court martial management cell was established specifically to administer courts martial, consisting of five service and civilian support personnel.

The Army—in both 1980 and 1990, the lawyer strength of the Adjutant General Corps Army Legal Services (AGC(ALS)), formerly the Army Legal Corps, was approximately 53, with the number of these involved in court martial related work estimated as 32. The lawyer strength for 2000 is 97. It is estimated that about 25 to 30 support staff existed in the years 1980 and 1990, and that there were approximately 72 support staff in the year 2000. The exact figures cannot be quoted as a number of the support staff were locally employed personnel at overseas stations, and the figures are not held centrally.

In April 1997 the Army Prosecuting Authority (APA) was formed, with two branches—one in the UK, the other in Germany. The total strength of the APA during the year 2000 dealing with courts martial was:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Lawyers | 30 |
| Support staff | 32 |

The Royal Air Force—the number of qualified lawyers in the RAF, for the years requested, are:

| *Year* | *Qualified lawyers* |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 21(8) |
| 1990 | 24(9) |
| 2000 | 32(12) |

The bracketed figures represent the estimated number of qualified RAF legal officers who were involved in discipline casework, which includes courts martial. Prior to the establishment of the RAF Prosecuting Authority in 1997, some legal officers, particularly in overseas locations, combined a small amount of court martial work with other duties. It is estimated that the number of RAF legal support staff has remained constant at approximately 13 (one NCO and 12 civilians) for each of the dates requested.

## Training (Canada)

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many UK service personnel have been involved in training in Canada in each of the last three years; how many have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* seriously injured; how many incidents there have been involving live firing; and if he will make a statement. [7179]

**Mr. Ingram:** The facilities used by the UK armed forces in Canada at Suffield and Wainwright offer excellent training opportunities and, as is the case wherever we train, safety is of paramount importance. Safety is managed by trained staff using GPS, cellular phone and terrain data base technology. Any death or injury is, of course, a matter of great regret, but our safety record in Canada—as elsewhere—is good.

The numbers of UK service personnel involved in training in Canada in each of the last three years, the numbers killed and seriously injured, and the number of live firing incidents that were investigated by the land accident investigation team (LAIT) are shown in the table.

| | *1999* | *2000* | *2001*[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Numbers of UK Service personnel involved in training | 5,665 | 5,579 | 7,712 |
| Numbers killed | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Numbers seriously injured | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Numbers of live firing incidents investigated by LAIT | 4 | 8 | 3 |

[1] To date

## Terrorist Attacks (USA)

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his counterparts in *(a)* NATO and *(b)* the European Union on the United Kingdom's response to the events in the USA on 11 September; and if he will make a statement. [7170]

**Mr. Hoon:** We are committed to pursuing concrete steps to counter terrorism in a number of international forums, and continue to meet overseas colleagues as part of the effort to build a strong international coalition against terrorism. In particular, I have met with NATO and EU colleagues on a number of occasions since 11 September, including during the NATO and EU informal ministerial meetings in Brussels on 26 September and 12 October respectively, to discuss measures to be taken in response to the attacks on the United States.

For the first time in its history, NATO has invoked article 5 of the North Atlantic treaty, which states that an armed attack on one ally is an attack on all. Allies have now agreed material assistance to the US in response to the 11 September outrages, including the deployment of AWACS early warning aircraft and the Standing Naval Force Mediterranean.

The EU Special Council on 21 September agreed to co-operate with the US in bringing to justice and punishing the perpetrators of the 11 September attacks, and approved a set of measures to combat terrorism, including enhancing police and judicial co-operation, developing international legal instruments, putting an end to the funding of terrorism and strengthening air security. The General Affairs Council on 8 October confirmed that all partners strongly support the US and UK military action.

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the criteria to be used to determine terrorist targets to be attacked by NATO in response to the American World Trade Centre and Pentagon attacks. [7135]

**Mr. Hoon:** NATO, as an organisation, has not participated in attacks on terrorist targets in Afghanistan. The alliance has, however, invoked article 5 of the Washington treaty, which states that an armed attack on

one ally is an attack on all, in response to the 11 September terrorist attacks. This is the strongest possible message that NATO allies stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States in response to these outrages. Further to a request from the US, allies have agreed to take 8 measures in support of the US response to the terrorist attacks, including deployment of AWACS early warning aircraft to the United States.

US and British forces operations in Afghanistan over recent days are designed to damage, disrupt and destroy al-Qaeda's terrorist network and elements of the military infrastructure of the Taliban, whose support has allowed Afghanistan to be used as a base for terrorism across the world. The targets included terrorist training camps, military airfields and air defence sites.

## Civil Service

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what proportion of each civil service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the UK; what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement. [6832]

**Dr. Moonie:** The information required is given in the following tables:

*Number of staff by grade level and region (Full-time equivalent) April 2000*

| | Grade equivalent (paid grade) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Government office region* | *SCS* | *Band B* | *Band C* | *Band D* | *Band E* | *Industrial/ other grades* | *All grades* |
| London | 130 | 707 | 2,377 | 1,621 | 3,198 | 557 | 8,590 |
| South East | 71 | 1,283 | 5,268 | 4,102 | 6,688 | 4,962 | 22,375 |
| South West | 89 | 1,170 | 6,038 | 4,221 | 7,268 | 3,986 | 22,772 |
| West Midlands | 17 | 499 | 1,498 | 1,239 | 2,177 | 2,583 | 8,014 |
| North West | 1 | 17 | 260 | 325 | 1,109 | 445 | 2,156 |
| North East | — | — | 42 | 42 | 173 | 230 | 487 |
| Yorks and Humber | 2 | 21 | 293 | 693 | 1,011 | 966 | 2,986 |
| East Midlands | — | 22 | 331 | 339 | 982 | 952 | 2,626 |
| Eastern | 8 | 164 | 1,391 | 1,331 | 2,430 | 1,061 | 6,385 |
| England total | 318 | 3,881 | 17,499 | 13,914 | 25,038 | 15,743 | 76,392 |
| Wales | 3 | 37 | 328 | 711 | 1,384 | 2,512 | 4,975 |
| Scotland | 3 | 90 | 1,080 | 1,430 | 3,811 | 2,980 | 9,394 |
| Northern Ireland | 1 | 13 | 215 | 241 | 1,103 | 1,655 | 3,228 |
| Unreported and elsewhere | 40 | 261 | 1,571 | 616 | 710 | 3,146 | 6,344 |
| Grand total | 365 | 4,282 | 20,693 | 16,912 | 32,046 | 26,036 | 100,333 |

*Number of staff by grade level and region (Full-time equivalent) April 2000*

| | Grade equivalent (paid grade) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Government office region* | *SCS* | *Band B* | *Band C* | *Band D* | *Band E* | *Industrial/ other grades* | *All grades* |
| London | 36 | 17 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 2 | 9 |
| South East | 19 | 30 | 25 | 24 | 21 | 19 | 22 |
| South West | 24 | 27 | 29 | 25 | 23 | 15 | 23 |
| West Midlands | 5 | 12 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 8 |
| North West | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| North East | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | — |
| Yorks and Humber | 1 | — | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| East Midlands | — | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Eastern | 2 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 4 | 6 |
| England total | 87 | 91 | 85 | 82 | 78 | 60 | 76 |
| Wales | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 5 |
| Scotland | 1 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 12 | 11 | 9 |
| Northern Ireland | — | — | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Unreported and elsewhere | 11 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 12 | 6 |
| Grand total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Median salary by pay band as at September 2000*

| *Grade equivalence pay band* | *Salary (£)* |
|---|---|
| SCS | 56,990 |
| Band B | 35,639 |
| Band C | 20,873 |
| Band D | 18,400 |
| Band E | 16,771 |
| Industrial/other grades | 26,075 |

## Royal Navy Vessels

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Navy vessels are *(a)* ready for active service, *(b)* currently undergoing refit and *(c)* out of service but not currently undergoing refit; what proportion of all vessels each category represents; and if he will make a statement. [6956]

**Mr. Ingram:** The following table shows, as at 1 October 2001, the Royal Navy vessels undergoing refits or docking periods and the total number of vessels in each class. There are currently no vessels held out of service.

| *(i) Type* | *(ii) Vessels undergoing refit/docking period* | *(iii) Percentage of vessels* | *(iv) Total number* |
|---|---|---|---|
| SSBN | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| SSN | Sceptre<br>Spartan<br>Torbay<br>Trenchant<br>Turbulent | 42 | 12 |
| CVS | Invincible<br>Ark Royal | 66 | 3 |
| Destroyers/Frigates | Liverpool<br>Manchester<br>Iron Duke<br>Cardiff<br>Cumberland<br>Somerset<br>Grafton | 22 | 32 |
| Minor war vessels | Cottesmore<br>Sandown | 9 | 22 |
| Patrol vessels | Dumbarton<br>Castle | 28 | 7 |
| Royal fleet auxiliaries | Orangeleaf | 6 | 17 |

All RN vessels other than those listed at (ii) above are within the operation of the fleet and as such are ready for active service within agreed timescales.

### Awareness Events

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events his Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5036]

**Dr. Moonie:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### BBC World Service

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he was consulted on the ending of shortwave broadcasting by the BBC World Service to North America and Australasia; and if he will make a statement. [7355]

**Mr. MacShane:** Operational decisions on resource allocation are for the World Service, working within the framework of overall objectives agreed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The World Service informed the Government of its plan to withdraw from short wave broadcasts to the regions concerned in advance. The Government have asked the World Service to review the impact on audience figures next year.

### Pakistan

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to Pakistan regarding their use of the death penalty to enforce their blasphemy laws. [7300]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We were instrumental in ensuring that the EU followed up an earlier demarche to the Pakistani Attorney-General and Minister of Law, Justice and Human Rights, Ms Shahida Jamil, on 28 August, which reiterated the EU's concern about the misuse of the blasphemy laws and the unacceptability of the death penalty in Pakistan.

Along with our EU partners, we will continue to look for appropriate opportunities to raise our concerns about the blasphemy laws and the application of the death penalty with the Pakistani authorities.

### Coalition against Terrorism

**Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the United States Government regarding the role of *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Saudi Arabia in the coalition against terrorism. [7830]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The Government cannot disclose the detail of confidential discussions. We are committed to building international consensus against terrorism through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.

### Kashmir

**Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is regarding the situation in Kashmir. [7832]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We remain concerned by the situation in Kashmir and continue to urge India and Pakistan to persevere with dialogue to resolve all issues outstanding between them. In this context, we welcome the recent contacts between President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee.

**Ross Cranston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for the people of Kashmir following the meeting between Indian and Pakistani leaders. [7090]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We welcomed the talks between Prime Minister Vajpayee and General Musharraf in July. We hope that India and Pakistan will persevere with dialogue and reach a peaceful settlement to this issue.

**Ross Cranston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made since July in allowing international human rights monitors to enter Kashmir. [7089]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I regret that there has been no progress since my answer to the same question by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Mrs. Fitzsimons) on 10 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 474W. We continue to impress upon the Indian Government the benefits of transparency and regularly urge them to allow access for human rights bodies, including the UN Rapporteurs on

Torture and on Extra-judicial Executions, the Working Group on Disappearances and groups such as Amnesty International.

### Royal Prerogative

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions since 26 July when he has exercised his powers under the royal prerogative. [8010]

**Mr. MacShane:** A number of powers under the royal prerogative are exercised on the advice of the Secretary of State. These include the conduct of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the management of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Records are not kept centrally of the individual occasions on which such powers are exercised.

### Brazil

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the *(a)* ministerial visits and *(b)* visits by officials to Brazil in the last year. [7209]

**Mr. MacShane:** In the 12-month period prior to the date this question was tabled, the following outward ministerial visits took place to Brazil:

18 to 24 September 2000: The Attorney-General

15 to 19 October 2000: The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

4 to 8 November 2000: The Minister for Housing

6 to 7 December 2000: The Minister for Schools

30 July to 1 August 2001: The Prime Minister (accompanied by the Minister of State for Trade and Investment and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and myself).

In the same period, the following senior officials visited Brazil:

2 to 6 October 2000: Chief Clerk, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

26 November to 1 December 2000: Chief of Air Staff, Ministry of Defence

27 November to 1 December 2000: Director Americas, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

7 to 8 June 2001: Director General for Trade Policy, Department of Trade and Industry

19 to 27 June 2001: Director Americas, Trade Partners UK

16 to 19 July: Director Americas, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

All visiting Ministers were accompanied by at least one official. In the case of the Prime Minister, the official delegation to Brazil comprised 24 persons.

### Civil Servants (Retirement Ages)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of his Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7240]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The normal retirement age for all employees in the FCO and in the non-departmental public bodies and executive agencies for which it is responsible is 60. However, for each completed year of service in certain posts overseas (prior to 1972), the retiring age is reduced by 3 months, though not so as to reduce it below 55.

Retirement on compulsory, flexible or approved early retirement terms applies to staff aged 50 or over.

### Indonesia

**Ann Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has collated about the number of civilians killed in Aceh, Indonesia, since the commencement of the current military operation on 2 May; and what representations his Department has made to the Indonesian Government concerning their cessation of that operation. [6556]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** Precise figures for the number of deaths from violence in Aceh are not available, but an estimated 800 civilians have died during 2001 (up to early October). During a visit to Aceh on 1 October by EU Ambassadors based in Jakarta, the Deputy Chief of Police said that approximately 70 police had been killed, along with 30 military personnel and 100 members of the GAM (Free Aceh Movement).

HMG has made it clear to all the parties concerned on numerous occasions that the only basis for a peaceful, durable settlement is through negotiation.

I raised the issue with the Indonesian Authorities on 28 August and the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Paul Holmes) raised it with President Megawati and others on 11 September.

**Ann Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received concerning the use of British-made armoured vehicles by the North Sumatra Military Command, Bukit Barisan. [7693]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The Indonesian Government have told us that there are no Saladin armoured vehicles, or other British built equipment in Aceh. We are aware that an Indonesian magazine "Gatra", on 14 April 2001 showed a Saladin (not Saracen) patrolling the North Sumatra/Aceh border area, but on the North Sumatra side. Saladin armoured vehicles are 45 years old and are generally used for protected mobility of troops.

**Ann Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to encourage the Indonesian Government to invite UN experts on *(a)* extrajudicial executions, *(b)* torture, *(c)* arbitrary detentions, *(d)* the independence of judges and lawyers and *(e)* human rights defenders to visit Indonesia to carry out assessments on issues of concern. [6555]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** It is British Government policy to encourage all Governments to co-operate with UN mechanisms including the special procedures appointed to investigate specific thematic issues such as extra judicial executions and torture. If one of the UN Special Rapporteurs thought that it would be appropriate to visit Indonesia, we would encourage the Indonesian Government to facilitate such a visit.

We raise human right issues with the Indonesian authorities, both bilaterally and through the European Union, at every appropriate opportunity.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the human rights situation in Aceh and West Papua is being undertaken by the British Embassy in Indonesia; and if he will make a statement. [6948]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The British Embassy in Jakarta maintains regular contact with a wide range of NGOs, civil society, local government and parliament representatives to share information on human rights issues within Indonesia. In addition the Ambassador and his staff make regular visits to Aceh and West Papua, most recently in October 2001.

The British Government remain concerned about a range of human rights issues in Indonesia and I discussed these with the Vice President and the Attorney-General when I visited Jakarta in August.

### Angola

**Vernon Coaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for peace in Angola; what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of UN sanctions on the Unita forces in Angola; and what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Development about the human consequences of the civil war in Angola. [7439]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The way to a lasting peace in Angola is through dialogue, which must include the broadest possible range of Angolans.

The UN Monitoring Mechanism on Angolan Sanctions has just published its report (on 9 October). We are still studying its findings.

My noble Friend Baroness Amos, the Minister responsible for Africa last met the Secretary of State for International Development on 12 September to discuss Angola. We remain concerned at the human consequences of the civil war, which include widespread suffering, violation of human rights and the exclusion of civil society from the political process. We continue to urge dialogue, involving all parties to the conflict, as an essential first step towards addressing these problems.

### Afghanistan

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions UK representatives have had with the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement. [7435]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** British officials maintain regular contact with the Northern Alliance through the Charge d'Affaires at the Afghan Embassy in London. Officials have also had a range of contacts with other members of the Northern Alliance including in Afghanistan and during visits by them to Europe.

### Morocco

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the United Nations and the Government of Morocco concerning the holding of an independent referendum to allow the Saharwi people to decide their own future, including the option of independence. [7279]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The UK supported United Nations Security Council resolution 1359 that was passed unanimously on 29 June 2001. This reiterated full support for the ongoing efforts of MINURSO to implement the Settlement Plan and the agreements by the parties to hold a free, fair and impartial referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. We fully support the efforts of the UN Secretary General to invite all parties to meet directly, or through proximity talks under the auspices of his personal Envoy, James Baker, in order to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to this issue and we continue to encourage all parties to do so.

We regularly discuss the issue of Western Sahara with the Government of Morocco, most recently during my visit to Morocco on 24 to 26 September.

### International Army Fair

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visitors, and from which countries, were granted entry to the United Kingdom, under immigration law, to attend the International Army Fair held in London from 11 September. [7281]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We do not keep records of the number of visitors or their nationalities granted entry to the United Kingdom to attend specific events. To provide the information requested would require manual searches of records at overseas Posts and ports of entry, which could be done only at disproportionate cost.

### Chechnya

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the human rights situation in Chechnya is being undertaken by UK representatives; and if he will make a statement. [6987]

**Peter Hain:** We remain very concerned about human rights in Chechnya although security concerns preclude travel there, officials in London and overseas monitor the human rights situation closely. Apart from media reports, UK representatives receive regular updates from the Council of Europe and the OSCE Assistance Group, and from a number of humanitarian relief agencies. In addition, the FCO is in frequent contact with human rights organisations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Russian NGO, Memorial. They all make an invaluable contribution to our assessment of the human rights situation in the republic.

### Chagos Islands

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what visits to the Chagos Islands have been facilitated for the Ilois people by the High Commissioner; and if such visits include Diego Garcia. [7283]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The Commissioner for the British Indian Ocean Territory has received a request to facilitate a visit by a party of Ilois to the outer islands of the Territory. This is still under consideration.

### Burma

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Burma concerning human rights abuses and political freedoms. [6773]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We take every opportunity to register our concerns through our Embassy in Rangoon and visiting officials although our contacts with the Burmese regime are naturally limited. In addition we regularly make our views known through the EU and also the United Nations. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's public statement of 31 August welcomed the continued release of political prisoners and called for urgency to be injected into the process under way in Burma.

### Visas (Subcontinent)

**Ross Cranston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the main reasons for refusal of applications for family visit visas in *(a)* Islamabad and *(b)* New Delhi. [7091]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** Ministers have made no formal assessment. However, the Independent Monitor for entry clearance refusals without the right of appeal has a remit to review refusals of family visit visas up to 2 October 2000, when the right of appeal for this category of visitor was reintroduced. He will present his conclusions later this year in his annual report to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, who will lay a copy of the report in both Houses.

### Settlement Visas

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for settlement visas were made by those wishing to live in same-sex relationships with UK citizens in each year since 1998; how many were granted; how many *(a)* applications and *(b)* appeals are outstanding; and if he will make a statement. [6438]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The total number of settlement applications received, issued and refused by those wishing to live in same-sex relationships for 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 are as follows:

| | *Received* | *Issued* | *Refused* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1998 | 109 | 95 | 14 |
| 1999 | 96 | 91 | 5 |
| 2000 | 146 | 140 | 6 |
| 2001 | 94 | 89 | 5 |

The 2001 figures are based on monthly statistical reports received from the 109 largest entry clearance posts up to June 2001. The remaining entry clearance posts submit information on an annual basis. To answer this question for all 164 posts could be done only at disproportionate costs.

We have no record of any outstanding applications.

We do not record separately how many appeals are outstanding. Manual searches would be required to obtain such information and could be done only at disproportionate cost.

### Fundamentalist Paramilitary Groups

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the number of UK citizens involved with fundamentalist paramilitary groups in *(a)* Afghanistan, *(b)* Kashmir, *(c)* Pakistan *(d)* Chechnya, *(e)* Lebanon and *(f)* Palestinian Authority territories; and if he will make a statement. [7531]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We have no accurate figures for the number of UK citizens who may be involved with terrorists or other such groups in the places named.

### Terrorist Attacks (USA)

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his counterparts in *(a)* NATO and *(b)* the European Union on the United Kingdom's response to the events in the USA on 11 September; and if he will make a statement. [7169]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We are committed to pursuing concrete steps to counter terrorism in a number of international fora, including the UN, NATO and the European Union. As the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons on 4 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 671–75, he and the Foreign Secretary have been in intensive contact with foreign leaders from every part of the world over the past few weeks. The Prime Minister visited Berlin, Paris, New York and Washington on 19–21 September; Moscow, Islamabad and New Delhi on 4–6 October; and Oman and Cairo on 10–12 October; and the Foreign Secretary visited Jordan, Iran, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt on 24–27 September as part of the effort to build a strong international coalition against terrorism.

We are also taking action in international institutions:

UN Security Council resolution 1368 was adopted on 12 September. The Council unanimously expressed its readiness to take all necessary steps in response to the attacks. The resolution also stated that the Council would hold accountable those indirectly responsible for these acts—those who aid, support or harbour the perpetrators—as well as those directly responsible. On 28 September, the Council adopted resolution 1373, which contained a series of measures to tackle the roots of terrorism. In particular, it stated that all countries should target terrorist finances and ensure that no safe haven is provided to any known terrorist organisations.

Also on 12 September, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) agreed that if the attack against the US was directed from abroad it should be regarded as an action covered by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Article 5 is the collective self-defence commitment at the core of NATO, under which the Parties agree that an

armed attack against one or more of them shall be considered an attack against them all. On 2 October the US briefed the NAC on the results of their investigations. Lord Robertson, the NATO Secretary General, concluded that it was now clear that the attack had been directed from overseas and that Article 5 was therefore now operational. This is the first time in the history of NATO that Article 5 has been invoked, and is the strongest possible signal of Allied solidarity in the face of the attacks on the US. NATO's North Atlantic Council has now agreed material assistance to the US, including the use of AWACS early warning aircraft.

The Heads of State and Government of the European Union at the Special European Council on 21 September expressed their total support of the American people in the face of the deadly terrorist attacks. They agreed to co-operate with the US in bringing to justice and punishing the perpetrators, sponsors and accomplices of such barbaric acts. The Council also approved a concrete set of measures to combat terrorism, including enhancing police and judicial co-operation, developing international legal instruments, putting an end to the funding of terrorism and strengthening aviation security. The General Affairs Council on 8 October confirmed the EU's strong support for US and UK military action.

We will continue our diplomatic effort in the coming weeks to strengthen international efforts against terrorism.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the role of the security services in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* the United Kingdom and *(c)* other members of the European Union in identifying potential terrorist attacks; and if he will make a statement. [7172]

**Mr. Straw:** The hon. Member will be aware that it is long-standing Government policy not to comment on operational intelligence matters. However, while that policy is not going to change, it is no secret that we work closely with the US and other allies to counter the threat of terrorism, which is kept under constant review; where we have specific information, we act on it.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for international security of the recent atrocities in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. [7171]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** What happened on 11 September was an act without parallel in the history of terrorism.

The fight against terrorism needs to be a global one. As the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons on 4 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 671–75, we have been in intensive contact with foreign leaders from every part of the world over the past few weeks. What we have encountered is an unprecedented level of solidarity and commitment to work together. We are continuing our intensive diplomatic effort to build a strong international coalition against terrorism. We are taking action in the UN, G8, EU and NATO.

The Prime Minister also stated on 4 October that, in the face of the evidence, our immediate objectives are clear. We must bring bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders to justice and eliminate the terrorist threat they pose. And we must ensure that Afghanistan ceases to harbour and sustain international terrorism. But we also have to continue our attempts to resolve conflicts, defuse tensions and work for peace in other troubled regions of the world.

The military action we are taking with the US is targeted against places we know to be involved in the operation of terror or against the military apparatus of the Taliban. The military plan has been put together mindful of our determination to avoid civilian casualties.

### Departmental Staff

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate total annual staff costs for his Department and its agencies by nation and region of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6817]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not have a national or regional distribution of staff. Almost all Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff within the UK are located in our offices in London or Hanslope Park. A very small number may at any time be on secondment to other Government Departments, Government agencies or private institutions around the UK.

### London Weighting

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the total annual value of London weightings and London living allowances for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [6818]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not pay any separate London weighting or London living allowance.

### Correspondence

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what was, for each year since 1995, the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by his Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if he will make a statement; [7035]

(2) what was, for each year since 1995, the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords. [7034]

**Mr. Straw:** The effective handling of correspondence and PQs is a issue to which I, and ministerial colleagues, attach great importance.

General information on the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall and on overall performance is published by the Cabinet Office. Figures for 2000 were published on 6 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 324–28W and on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W.

On Parliamentary Questions, I refer to the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by the then Foreign Secretary my right hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 29 March 2001, *Official Report*, column 743W.

### Common Agricultural Policy

**Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with *(a)* EU member states and *(b)* the accession countries about reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; and if he will make a statement. [7987]

**Peter Hain:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, is in regular dialogue with her counterparts in the European Union and candidate countries on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. I frequently raise the importance of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy with European Union and other Governments, as do other members of the Government including the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Our goals are reduction of the costs of the Common Agricultural Policy and better delivery of policy outcomes. We want to reduce the overall burden of the Common Agricultural Policy, align European Union and world prices more closely, and target support measures on the rural economy and the environment. These are also important for our ambitions for a new World Trade Organisation round for enlargement of the European Union.

There has been progress. In the 1980s spending on the Common Agricultural Policy was over 60 per cent. of European Community budget. In 2001 it will be around 45 per cent.

As a result of the Agenda 2000 package agreed by Heads of State at the 1999 Berlin European Council, spending on the Common Agricultural Policy will decline in real terms for 2002. Mid-term reviews of the Common Agricultural Policy are scheduled for 2002–03. The Government's objective is to secure changes that benefit consumers, taxpayers, the rural economy, the farming community and the environment. There is increasing recognition within the European Union of the need for reform.

### Sudan

**David Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the application for an export licence for the supply of one Bedford refuelling tanker to Blue Bird Aviation Ltd. (Sudan). [8045]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The Government recently approved an application for a licence to export one Bedford refuelling tanker for Blue Bird Aviation Ltd. (Sudan). Although the tanker is on the Military List, it will be used to refuel light civilian aircraft at Khartoum airport, including those operated by UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the ICRC, all of which are working to alleviate the suffering in Sudan. This decision does not affect the Government's continued support for the EU common position on arms exports to Sudan.

### European Governance White Paper

**David Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the publication of the European Commission's White Paper on European Governance. [8044]

**Peter Hain:** I welcome the publication of the White Paper. It is an important initiative in the effort to make the EU's institutions more efficient, effective, transparent and accountable. I particularly welcome the emphasis of the White Paper on practical ideas which can be implemented without the need for Treaty change. A copy of the White Paper has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### Lord Ashcroft

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date his Department received a letter from Lord Ashcroft and Carlisle Holdings regarding alleged remarks made by the Secretary of State for International Development at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in 1999; on what date his Department responded to the letter; if he will place in the Library copies of this correspondence; and if he will make a statement. [6582]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I refer the hon. member to the answer I gave him on 20 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 484W.

### European Union

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he expects a draft constitution for the European Union produced by one of the Union's institutions to be brought to the attention of Her Majesty's Government before the next IGC. [7426]

**Peter Hain:** The Prime Minister said in his speech in Warsaw last year that

> "there is an important debate about a Constitution for Europe. In practice I suspect that, given the sheer diversity and complexity of the EU, its constitution, like the British constitution, will continue to be found in a number of different treaties, laws and precedents. It is perhaps easier for the British than for others to recognise that a constitutional debate must not necessarily end with a single, legally binding document called a Constitution for an entity as dynamic as the EU."

The Government have suggested that there could be a clear political statement of principals. Others will no doubt make their own contributions to this debate, and we will look at each proposal on its merits.

### Departmental Properties

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by his Department in (i) the current year and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6584]

**Mr. MacShane:** I list the projects, some contractually committed, and others planned to start (budget permitting), during financial years 2001–02 and 2002–03.

I must caution however, that it is almost certain that due to changing priorities and budget availability, the timing of some of the planned projects may slip and that some may even have to be postponed indefinitely.

A baseline capital budget of £32 million is available in each of these two financial years to fund the listed projects. In addition to this figure, and in accordance with an asset recycling agreement with the Treasury, the funding of many of the listed projects is dependent on the capital realised through the sale of existing properties.

The list includes only projects valued at over £1 million. To include the smaller projects at our posts overseas would involve disproportionate cost. Budgeted expenditure has been included on the list only for those projects that are contractually committed. We have not provided budgeted expenditure for the remaining projects, as its disclosure could prejudice the outcome of competitive tendering.

*Estate strategy unit: contractually committed projects over £1 million*

| *Post* | *Project* | *Background* | *Current total estimated cost £K* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Accra | Build new visa office | Visa demand increase | 3,330 |
| Beirut | Fit out new leased office | Present office unsatisfactory; relocation required | 1,780 |
| Buenos Aires | Residence—services renewal and consequential repairs | Need | 3,140 |
| Dar es Salaam | New offices | Present office unsatisfactory—security | 7,200 |
| Lima | New offices ingoing works | Present office unsafe in earthquake zone | 1,400 |
| Los Angeles | Fit out new office | Moving to smaller, more efficient offices | 1,080 |
| Moscow | Residence conversion of two wings to provide staff accommodation | Spend to save | 2,390 |
| Sofia | Fit out leased office | Former office unsatisfactory. Expansion—EU/NATO applicant | 1,860 |
| Tirana | Extension of office | Expansion of mission | 1,890 |
| Washington | Office replacement windows | Existing windows now 40+ years old and worn out | 2,820 |
| Yerevan | New offices | Existing leased offices inadequate for permanent occupation | 2,940 |
| Total | | | 29,830 |

*Estate strategy unit: contractually committed projects over £1 million—planned*

| *Post* | *Project* | *Background* | *Planned start* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Baku | New leased office and residence ingoing work | Expansion of the post | FY 2001–02 |
| Bucharest | New residence ingoing works | Replacement of unsatisfactory leased residence | FY 2001–02 |
| Cairo | New visa office | Replacement of structurally unsound and unsuitable building | FY 2001–02 |
| Caracas | Fitting out new office suite | Existing building no longer suitable | FY 2002–02 |
| Doha | New compound—move to diplomatic enclave | Replacement of three existing unsatisfactory offices and residence | FY 2002–03 |
| Dubai | Build six staff houses in compound | Spend to save | FY 2001–02 |
| Dublin | Conversion and fitting out new residence | Enabled sale of existing residence and valuable grounds | FY 2001–02 |
| Dublin | Build senior staff houses | Spend to save | FY 2002–03 |
| Islamabad | New visa office | Needed to handle large increase in visa demand | FY 2002–03 |
| Istanbul | Pera House major repairs | Fire damage | FY 2001–02 |
| Kampala | Build new office | Replacement of insecure 1960s building | FY 2002–03 |
| Kiev | Reconfigure office | To accommodate expansion | FY 2002–03 |
| Lagos | Junior staff housing | Spend to save | FY 2002–03 |
| Madras | Provide new offices in compound | Visa demand increasing and replacement of unsound building | FY 2002–03 |
| Nairobi | Build new visa office including site purchase | Visa demand increase | FY 2002–03 |
| Rabat | Purchase site and build new office | Replacement of undersized 1970s leased building | FY 2002–03 |
| St. Petersburg | Convert top floor of office to residence | Utilising surplus office space to enable all other staff to be housed in existing residential block | FY 2002–03 |
| Tbilisi | Fit out new office | To replace unsatisfactory office in an hotel building | FY 2002–03 |
| Tunis | Residence refurbishment | Essential renewal of building services | FY 2002–03 |
| Vilnius | Residence ingoings | Expansion—EU/NATO applicant. New residence releases space for office expansion | FY 2001–02 |

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### London Weighting

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will estimate the total value of London weightings and London living allowances for her Department; and if she will make a statement. [6836]

**Ms Hewitt:** The Department of Trade and Industry consolidated London weighting and local pay additions into base pay in 1997. Since then, it has paid staff in London at a higher rate than equivalent staff in the National area through the use of separate pay ranges.

### Departmental Properties

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will estimate the total running costs for buildings used, owned or rented by her Department for each nation and region of the UK, and estimate the average cost per square metre for properties used by her Department as a whole, and by region and nation of the UK. [6837]

**Ms Hewitt:** The estimated Running costs for Department of Trade and Industry properties in the United Kingdom for the financial year 2001–02 are shown in the table.

| | Area/m² | Total running cost (£) | Cost (£)/m² |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Nation* | | | |
| England | 101,014.65 | 50,381,200.00 | 498.75 |
| Scotland | 11,993.00 | 1,524,000.00 | 127.07 |
| Wales | 3,359.00 | 211,000.00 | 62.82 |
| Northern Ireland | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Total UK | 116,366.65 | 52,116,200.00 | 447.86 |
| *English regions* | | | |
| North East | 1,330.65 | 136,200.00 | 102.21 |
| North West | 309.00 | 82,000.00 | 265.37 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 2,016.00 | 401,000.00 | 198.91 |
| East Midlands | 213.00 | 54,000.00 | 253.52 |
| West Midlands | 1,349.00 | 389,000.00 | 288.36 |
| East | 1,316.00 | 220,000.00 | 167.17 |
| South East | 701.00 | 249,000.00 | 355.21 |
| South West | 190.00 | 13,000.00 | 68.42 |
| London | 93,590.00 | 48,837,000.00 | 521.82 |
| Total regions | 101,014.65 | 50,381,200.00 | 498.75 |

*Note:*
Total running costs exclude VAT

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by her Department in (i) the current year and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6592]

**Ms Hewitt:** The Department has two projects exceeding £1,000,000.

The extension of the Conference Centre in 1 Victoria Street is forecast to cost £3,191,000. The expenditure is spread over three financial years.

| Year | £ |
|---|---|
| 2000–01 | 416,000 |
| 2001–02 | 2,709,000 |
| 2002–03 | 66,000 |

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by her Department, broken down by leases by the Department itself, its next step agencies and its non-departmental public bodies, differentiating between purchases made as a result of the creation of new bodies and those purchases made by established bodies. [7820]

**Nigel Griffiths:** This information is not held centrally and to obtain this information would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold.

The PFI project to provide serviced accommodation for the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington involves a capital cost to the PFI contractor of £82,000,000.

### Xinjiang-Shanghai Pipeline

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps she is taking to encourage the Chinese authorities to undertake social and environmental impact assessments in connection with the proposed west-east pipeline from Xinjiang to Shanghai. [7085]

**Nigel Griffiths:** We take advantage of every relevant Ministerial visit, both inward and outward, to encourage the Chinese Government to take the social and environmental aspects of any major project into account. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Sport highlighted this in connection with the proposed West-East pipeline project, to the Vice Chairmen of both the State Development and Planning Commission and State Economic and Trade Commission when he was in China in February.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Energy, will stress the importance of the issue when he visits China later this month.

### Export Licences

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many export licence applications have taken *(a)* up to one month, *(b)* two to three months, *(c)* three to six months and *(d)* over six months to decide in each of the last five years. [7210]

**Nigel Griffiths:** On 1 March 1999 a new IT system named ELATE was introduced to process Standard Individual Export Licence (SIEL) applications in the DTI's Export Control Organisation (ECO). Data can therefore be given in the form requested from March 1999 and are included in the table. Prior to that date information on SIELs was not stored in a format which allows us to retrieve the data without incurring disproportionate cost.

It would also entail disproportionate cost to provide the appropriate statistics for Open Individual Export Licence (OIEL) applications.

Details of licensing performance against published Government targets have been outlined in the Government's Annual Reports on Strategic Export Controls since 1997. These can be accessed via the Foreign Office web-site at www.fco.gov.uk.

*Breakdown of the number of SIELs issued in one, two to three, three to six and over six months*[1]

| Year | Processed in: (working days) | Number of SIELs | Per cent. of SIELs |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1999[2] | 0–20 | 5,077 | 65.7 |
| | 21–60 | 2,443 | 31.6 |
| | 61–120 | 197 | 2.5 |
| | Over 120 | 9 | 0.1 |
| 2000[3] | 0–20 | 6,342 | 59.9 |
| | 21–60 | 3,381 | 31.9 |
| | 61–120 | 607 | 5.7 |
| | Over 120 | 259 | 2.4 |
| 2001[4] | 0–20 | 4,722 | 60.0 |
| | 21–60 | 2,364 | 30.0 |
| | 61–120 | 484 | 6.2 |
| | Over 120 | 299 | 3.8 |

[1] Figures include all cases—both those circulated and not circulated by DTI to our advisory departments.
[2] 1 March to 31 December
[3] 1 January to 31 December
[4] 1 January to 26 September

*Note:*
In June 2000 a change in the criteria for circulating cases meant that nearly all cases would, from that point, be circulated. The figures given do not therefore match those in the Annual Reports on Strategic Export Controls because figures given in those reports made a distinction between circulated and non-circulated cases.

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps she has taken to ensure that advice and assistance given to exporters to *(a)* Pakistan and *(b)* China is consistent with the requirements of export licences; and if she will make a statement. [6558]

**Nigel Griffiths:** Trade Partners UK work in the United Kingdom and in overseas markets to offer appropriate advice to British exporters and investors seeking to do business. Trade Partners UK staff refer inquiries from companies about export licence requirements for all markets to the 'DTI's Export Control Organisation'. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the exporting company to ensure that any export it makes complies with export control legislation in force at the time of the export.

### Office of Communications

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the estimated cost of setting up and running the shadow Ofcom is. [7791]

**Mr. Alexander:** A "shadow Ofcom" is not proposed, however, The Office of Communications Bill proposes to establish Ofcom to prepare to receive its regulatory functions at a later stage.

### Employment Tribunals

**Mrs. Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications were registered by the Employment Tribunal Service in 2000–01; how many of these cases were disposed of; in how many of these cases costs were awarded against (i) the applicant and (ii) the respondent; and what the average costs award was in each case. [8066]

**Alan Johnson:** The Employment Tribunals Service registered 130,408 applications in 2000–2001.

During this period, a total of 92,938 cases were disposed of, with costs being awarded in 247 cases, of which 167 were awarded against the applicant and 80 were awarded against the respondent.

The average cost award was £295.

*Source:*

Employment Tribunals Service

### Airline Aid

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to ask the Office of Fair Trading to investigate competition between UK airlines, and between UK and overseas airlines, following recent state intervention to assist the airline industry. [8019]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** The Office of Fair Trading has the power to investigate any market in which it believes anti-competitive activity may be occurring as the independent competition authority charged with such powers.

### Indonesia (Saladin Armoured Vehicles)

**Ann Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many export licences for Indonesia for components and associated equipment for Saladin armoured vehicles have been *(a)* applied for, *(b)* granted and *(c)* rejected since May 1997. [6545]

**Nigel Griffiths:** Inquiries are being made and I shall respond to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

### Regulations (Consultation)

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which new regulations issued by her Department since 1997 have been subject to a consultation period of less than 12 weeks. [7799]

**Nigel Griffiths:** The DTI has been responsible for over 500 regulations since May 1997, across the full range of its responsibilities, and records relating to these regulations are not held centrally, but by the management unit responsible for the policy area involved. The information requested could be obtained and collated only at disproportionate cost.

### Local Shops

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to implement the recommendations in the recent Better Regulation Task Force report, 'Local Shops; A Progress report on Small Firms Regulation'. [7805]

**Nigel Griffiths:** We plan to publish a Government response to the recommendations made in this report during October. The response will be laid in the Library of the House.

### Independent Company Law

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when she will consult on the recommendations made in the report of the independent company law review. [7797]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** The Government are studying carefully the recommendations of the Final Report of the independent Steering Group, which was published on 26 July. The report represents the results of three years' detailed work, and has been broadly welcomed. I am very grateful to all those who contributed to it.

A further announcement will be made to Parliament in due course.

### Broadband Provision

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on broadband provision throughout the UK in *(a)* 2001 to 2003 and *(b)* 2003 to 2006. [6520]

**Mr. Alexander:** Access to broadband technologies such as ADSL, cable or wireless is rising. Over the period 2001–06, other technologies, such as satellite, are expected to be made available, meaning that broadband services will be available throughout the UK.

The Government are seeking to help make the broadband market extensive and competitive. I recently invited Regional Development Agencies and the devolved administrations to put forward plans for the £30 million fund designed to develop innovative schemes to extend broadband networks. The Government seek to help and facilitate broadband strategies at regional or devolved level wherever possible. In addition, the Government are investigating the scope for aggregated public sector

demand, and are considering further policies in light of the recommendations of the Broadband Stakeholder Group.

### Sakina Security Services Ltd.

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will investigate the activities of Sakina Security Services Ltd; and if he will make a statement. [7554]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** The Department may use discretionary powers under the Companies Acts to conduct inquiries on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry where it appears that there has been misconduct in relation to the affairs of a company.

Any evidence which might justify an investigation is given full consideration by the department

### Info 2000 Software Ltd.

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on progress with the action being taken concerning Info 2000 Software Ltd. [7672]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** Info 2000 Software Ltd. was dissolved on 15 February 2000.

### Action against Terrorism

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce fast track procedures to close down companies believed to be involved in supporting terrorism at home and overseas; and if he will make a statement. [7530]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** Existing provisions allow for the winding up of companies and I understand my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be announcing shortly a number of steps including a package of financial measures to tackle terrorism.

### Booking Agencies

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if it was the intention for the Employment Business Regulations 2001 in relation to individual booking agents to apply to employment agencies in the entertainment industry. [7857]

**Alan Johnson:** The provisions of the draft Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2001 will apply to entertainment agents, that is to businesses which provide services in the entertainment sector for the purpose of finding persons employment or of supplying employers with persons for employment by them.

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will take steps to outlaw rebooking clauses whereby an agent procures a number of bookings for an artist in a venue for a period of time. [7869]

**Alan Johnson:** The Government have no intention of outlawing rebooking clauses in contracts between employment agents, their clients and hirers.

### Consumer Credit

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what plans she has to tighten the regulation of advertising relating to consumer credit; [6634]

(2) what proposals she has to update the Consumer Credit Act 1974. [6631]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** I published a consultation paper "Tackling loan sharks—and more!" on 25 July outlining my plans for updating our consumer credit legislation. In carrying out this review our key objectives will be to develop a new consumer credit regime that:

- targets rogue traders
- reduces burdens on legitimate businesses
- reflects market changes on consumer credit
- provides timely and effective advice to consumers and greater transparency when they take out loans.

Copies of the consultation paper are available in the Library of the House.

### Dolphin Communications

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when officials from the Radiocommunications Agency met representatives of Dolphin Telecommunications Ltd. of Basingstoke to discuss television interference in the vicinity of their mast at Deptford, Wilshire; what advice the Agency gave to *(a)* local residents and *(b)* Dolphin Communications; and if he will make a statement. [5863]

**Mr. Alexander:** Officials from the Radiocommunications Agency (RA) of my Department and Dolphin Telecommunications Ltd. first discussed television interference affecting residents adjacent to Dolphin's mast at Deptford, Wiltshire on 23 February. Subsequently, the RA carried out a detailed investigation into the problem which established that the interference was due to the use of masthead amplifiers fitted to the affected TV installations. The mast head amplifiers were intended to improve reception from the Rowridge TV transmitter but were also inadvertently picking up signals from the Dolphin transmitter.

RA tests showed that a suitable filter fitted between the amplifier and the TV aerial could resolve the interference and the affected residents were recommended to have such filters fitted to their TV installations. The RA established that Dolphin were operating within licence conditions. If any residents still have interference problems they should consult an aerial contractor for advice on fitting a suitable filter.

### Timber Products

**Mr. Lazarowicz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it a legal requirement that timber products imported and sold in the United Kingdom should have an independent chain of custody certificate showing forest origin of timber. [6654]

**Nigel Griffiths:** There is currently neither a practicable system nor sufficient consensual support from all stakeholders for an independent chain of custody certificate scheme to be a workable proposition.

The Government are actively investigating a range of options for intergovernmental agreements to combat illegal logging.

For their own purchases the Government have introduced a policy that requires their buyers actively to seek to buy timber and wood products from sustainable and legal sources.

### Regional Development Agencies

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what autonomy is given to RDA boards to spend their own budgets on a local bas... [7619]

**Alan Johnson:** Presently RDAs spend in accordance with set national programmes. From 1 April 2002 these will be replaced by a single broad programme giving greater freedom, subject to RDAs meeting agreed outcome and output targets. It is for each RDA, in consultation with regional partners, to assess the local priorities within the region in the Regional Economic Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

### Equal Pay (British Coal)

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the recent representations she has received about the equal pay claims of female canteen workers and cleaners against the former British Coal. [7537]

**Ms Hewitt:** In the last month I have received in the region of 110 representations on this issue. These have come from Members of Parliament and private individuals.

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many payments have been made and what is the total amount paid to settle the equal pay claims between female canteen workers and cleaners and British Coal. [7536]

**Ms Hewitt:** To date we have made 1,256 payments totalling around £10.7 million. The total cost of settlement will be in the region of £14 million.

### Supermarkets

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the supermarkets' voluntary code of practice toward suppliers in preventing monopoly practices. [7267]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is currently considering the Director General of Fair Trading's advice on a draft Code of Practice, recommended by the Competition Commission, to put relations between supermarkets and their suppliers on a clearer and more predictable basis.

### Sub-Post Offices

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many sub-post offices closed in each of the first two quarters of the 2001–02 financial year. [7665]

**Mr. Alexander:** I understand from Post Office Ltd. that total net closure of post offices in the first quarter of the current financial year was 119 and that figures for the second quarter to end September are not yet available.

### Enterprise Bill

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to publish an Enterprise Bill; and if she will make a statement. [7560]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** The two White Papers "Productivity and Enterprise: A World Class Competition Regime" and "Productivity and Enterprise: Insolvency—A Second Chance", published on 31 July, set out the Government's proposals for a series of radical pro-enterprise reforms to competition and bankruptcy rules.

The Government are committed to implementing these White Papers, and we have invited views on our proposals. Proposals for an Enterprise Bill were included in the Queen's speech in June of this year.

### Phoenix Fund Grants

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action the Small Business Service is taking to promote the availability of Phoenix Fund grants in deprived areas. [7804]

**Nigel Griffiths:** The Small Business Service is taking a range of actions to promote the availability of Phoenix Fund grants in deprived areas, including targeted mailshots to organisations that may wish to apply, news release for local press, TV and radio and information about the Fund on its website www.sbs.gov.uk/phoenix

A total of 668 applications have been received to date and 111 projects are under way. A further bidding round for support under the Fund for Community Development Financial Institutions is currently being held with a closing date of 26 October.

### Devolved Administrations

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her policy is with regard to *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in her Department giving evidence to (i) Scottish Parliament, (ii) Welsh Assembly and (iii) Northern Ireland Assembly committees; and to what categories of document she gives (A) full access, (B) restricted access and (C) no access to (w) Scottish Parliament, (x) Welsh Assembly, (y) Northern Ireland Assembly and (z) House of Commons select committees. [7051]

**Alan Johnson:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Cabinet Office.

## EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### Cerebral Palsy Sufferers

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what funding streams are available to voluntary organisations providing conductive education to children with cerebral palsy. [6265]

**Mr. Timms:** Any voluntary organisation or group in England which is working with or seeking to support pupils with special educational needs can apply to the Department for funding through the Special Educational Needs Small Programme Fund. The Fund supports projects that are time limited to one year to a maximum of £30,000.

### Language Qualifications

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if *(a)* GCSE, *(b)* A levels and *(c)* AS level qualifications are available in (i) Gujarati, (ii) Hindi, (iii) Somali and (iv) Urdu; which UK universities accept A levels or equivalent in these languages as satisfying admission criteria; and if she will make a statement. [6439]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** GCSE and AS/A level qualifications are available in Gujarati and Urdu. Hindi and Somali are not available at GCSE and AS/A level. Universities are autonomous bodies and each university is responsible for its own admissions criteria. The Department does not hold a list of the admissions criteria for each university. Candidates are advised to contact universities of their choice to find out entry requirements for careers they wish to pursue in advance of starting an A level course.

### Sixth Form Education

**Mr. Bacon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to encourage more students to enter sixth form education; and if she will make a statement. [6642]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** We have set out our vision for post-16 learning in the recent White Paper "Schools Achieving Success". We want all young people to continue after the age of 16 in high quality learning opportunities which best meet their needs and potential. This may be in school, college or in the work based route. We have established the Learning and Skills Council to drive this forward and have put in place a number of measures which provide the support and incentives young people need to take up and succeed in learning. We are introducing the new Connexions Service to provide advice and guidance to young people on the full range of learning options open to them and to help them progress within their chosen learning environment. We are also addressing the financial barriers to participation through piloting the Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme; providing Discretionary Funding targeted at specific learner needs, and the Connexions Card, which offers discounts on transport and learning materials.

### Primary School Pupils (Travel)

**Angela Watkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many primary age pupils are obliged to travel more than three miles to school; and how many did so in the school year before key stage 1 and 2 classes were limited to 30. [6656]

**Mr. Timms:** My Department does not keep figures of primary school children obliged to travel more than three miles to school. The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions has provided the following figures for all school journey lengths from its National Travel Survey.

*Trips to school by length: age 5 to 10: 1998–2000 (latest years available)*

| | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| Under 1 mile | 58 |
| 1 to under 2 miles | 22 |
| 2 to under 3 miles | 7 |
| 3 to under 5 miles | 7 |
| 5 miles and over | 6 |

Legislation to limit the size of infant classes for five, six and seven-year-olds to 30 or fewer came into force in September. The limit does not extend to key stage 2 classes. In implementing the limit we have made it clear to local education authorities that no child should have to travel an unreasonable distance to school because of the class size limit.

### School/College Transport

**Angela Watkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of education spending is taken up by home to school/college transport; and if she will make a statement. [6657]

**Mr. Timms:** Home to school/college transport accounts for some 2.5 per cent. of education spending.

### Teacher Training Students

**Angela Watkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of teacher training students in England and Wales completed their courses successfully in each of the past 10 years; and if she will make a statement. [6658]

**Mr. Timms:** The Initial Teacher Training Performance Profiles, published by the Teacher Training Agency show the percentage of final year trainees at 1 December in England who gained Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Figures are only available for academic years 1996–97 to 1999–2000.

*Percentage of final year trainees awarded QTS in:*

| *Year* | |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 87 |
| 1997–98 | 87 |
| 1998–99 | 89 |
| 1999–2000 | 88 |

*Note:*
1. The figures cover providers in England only.
2. The numbers of final year trainees awarded QTS relate to final examination boards at the end of the academic year. QTS awards made after the November following a trainee's final year will not be included in these figures.

*Source:*
Teacher Training Agency, ITT Performance Profiles

These figures do not take into account drop-out during earlier years of the course, which mainly applies to undergraduate trainees; nor do they include awards of qualified teacher status made after the November following a trainee's final year.

For the figures for Wales, I refer the hon. Member to the Welsh National Assembly.

### School Curriculum

**Stephen Hesford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to review the 14 to 19 curriculum. [6730]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** On 5 September, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State published the White Paper "Schools: Achieving Success" which makes it clear that we want to begin a debate about the best way to create a coherent phase for 14–19 education. The issues and our proposals will be set out in a consultation paper that will include:

How to increase choice for young people from the age of 14, so that their individual aptitudes, abilities and preferences can be met;

How to encourage all young people to stay in education and training beyond 16 and;

How to ensure—and where desirable extend—breadth in the post-16 academic curriculum.

### Ministerial Travel

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in her Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if she will make a statement; [6912]

(2) if she will list the official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in her Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if she will make a statement. [6911]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, at column 823W.

### Faith Schools

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the funding mechanism is for faith schools; and what the cost to public funds of such schools was in the last year for which figures are available. [7130]

**Mr. Timms:** Maintained schools having a religious character receive recurrent funding in accordance with sections 45 to 51 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 in the same way as other maintained schools. There may be slight variations in funding according to their status as voluntary or foundation schools, but such differences do not arise from their religious character as such. It is not possible to state the cost of maintaining such schools because they are not separately identified for funding purposes.

### Special Educational Needs

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children of compulsory school age were *(a)* statemented for special educational needs or *(b)* assessed for special educational needs for each of the last five years. [7258]

**Mr. Timms:** Information on the number of children of compulsory school age (5–15 years) with a statement of special educational needs in the last five years is as follows:

| *Year* | *Number of children* |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 208,204 |
| 1997 | 215,909 |
| 1998 | 221,334 |
| 1999 | 231,312 |
| 2000 | 234,615 |

The number of children (some of whom are not of compulsory school age) for whom a statement was made for the first time for the years for which figures are available is as follows:

| *Year* | *Number of children* |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 36,636 |
| 1997 | 35,648 |
| 1998 | 36,178 |
| 1999 | 35,421 |
| 2000 | [1]— |

[1] Not yet available

The number of children of compulsory school age assessed for special educational needs is not collected centrally. However the total number of children assessed for special educational needs (some of whom are not of compulsory school age) is as follows:

| *Year* | *Number of children* |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 38,643 |
| 1997 | 37,339 |
| 1998 | 37,826 |
| 1999 | 37,069 |
| 2000 | [1]— |

[1] Not yet available

### School Building Work

**Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children were kept out of school at the beginning of the autumn term owing to uncompleted building work. [7260]

**Mr. Timms:** The Department does not collect this type of information. It is the responsibility of LEAs to set term dates and to ensure that schools must deliver a minimum of 380 half day sessions in the school year and that they must open for at least 190 days in each year. Under exceptional circumstances where school opening has been delayed for a short time, as a result of delayed building works or other urgent health and safety related grounds, we would expect LEAs to encourage schools to use training days to avoid defaulting on the number of sessions delivered. We expect LEAs and schools to programme building works in a way that minimises disruption; however, building work can still be delayed through unforeseen problems or inclement weather.

### Maintained Schools

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimates she has made of the total sum

of money raised by maintained schools from *(a)* parental contributions, *(b)* business sponsorship and *(c)* other sources in each of the last five years. [7272]

**Mr. Timms:** No information is held centrally regarding money raised by maintained schools from sources other than funding made available through local education authorities.

### School Places

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimates she has made of the number of pupils of compulsory school age who had *(a)* not been offered a school place and *(b)* not accepted any school place offered on the first day of the current school term. [7273]

**Mr. Timms:** My Department does not collect this information. It is for local authorities to ensure that a place is available for every child whose parents want one and that any children of compulsory school age attend school regularly.

### State School Pupils

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate she has made of the number of pupils attending state schools outside their own local education authority area in September. [7274]

**Mr. Timms:** The information requested is not collected centrally.

Information on children educated in a local education authority area other than the one where they normally reside is only collected for those pupils with special educational needs.

### School Sixth Forms

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate she has made of the number of schools with sixth forms which have received no funding from their local education authority for the new sixth form curriculum in each of the last two years. [7275]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** No such estimate is available. Decisions on distribution were a matter for each local authority in the light of local priorities.

### Specialist Schools

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools have been awarded specialist status in each of the last five years in each category of specialists. [7276]

**Mr. Timms:** The total number of schools which have been granted Specialist Schools status in each of the last five years, in the four specialist areas, is given in the table.

*Number of schools which have been awarded specialist schools status in the last five years, by specialism*

| *Status* | *1996–97* | *1997–98* | *1998–99* | *1999–2000* | *2000–01* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arts College | 6 | 11 | 12 | 28 | 34 |
| Sports College | 11 | 15 | 11 | 30 | 34 |
| Language College | 15 | 11 | 15 | 28 | 27 |
| Technology College | 43 | 46 | 42 | 51 | 57 |

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate she has made of the number of schools seeking specialist status which have been unable to raise sufficient funds for this purpose. [7277]

**Mr. Timms:** Our network of 685 specialist schools shows that applicant schools across the country, including those from rural and inner city areas, have raised the sponsorship required, but we are aware some schools find this more difficult than others. It would not be practicable to make an estimate of the number of schools that have been unable to raise the funds but we have taken steps to ensure all schools have reasonable opportunity to do so. In 1999, the sponsorship requirement was halved to £50,000 and my Department grant-aids the Technology Colleges and Youth Sport Trusts, to provide advice to schools about raising sponsorship and raise funds themselves to support applicant schools. In addition we will continue to keep the sponsorship criteria under review.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools have applied for specialist status in each category in *(a)* the last academic year and *(b)* the current academic year. [7278]

**Mr. Timms:** The total number of schools which applied for Specialist School designation for September 2000 and September 2001, in each of the four specialist areas, is given in the table.

| *Status* | *September 2000* | *September 2001* |
|---|---|---|
| Arts College | 72 | 113 |
| Sports College | 41 | 55 |
| Language College | 45 | 55 |
| Technology College | 119 | 144 |
| Total | 277 | 369 |

### Teaching Assistants

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will state the ratio of pupils to teaching assistants in *(a)* Key Stage One and *(b)* Key Stage Two in each of the last five years. [7486]

**Mr. Timms:** Information on the number of teaching assistants by Key Stage is not collected centrally. However, the average number of children per adult in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes with one teacher is shown in the table.

*Average number of children per adult*[1]

| *Year* | *Key Stage 1* | *Key Stage 2* |
|---|---|---|
| 2001 | 15.5 | 19.8 |
| 2000 | 17.2 | 21.7 |
| 1999 | 17.6 | 22.5 |
| 1998 | 17.9 | 22.9 |
| 1997 | 18.4 | 23.1 |

[1] The number of children in classes divided by the total number of adults present at the time of the census

The latest pupil:teacher ratio and class size data were published in a Statistical Volume 'Schools in England January 2001' on 28 September, copies of which are available from the Library, or alternatively can be accessed from the Department for Education and Skills statistical website, www.dfes.gov.uk/statistics.

### Education (Northern Ireland)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent discussions her Department has had with the Northern Ireland Education Minister relating to *(a)* selective education and *(b)* school league tables. [7487]

**Mr. Timms:** My Department has not had any discussions with the Northern Ireland Education Minister in relation to *(a)* selective education and *(b)* school league tables.

### General Teaching Council Registration

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the benefits of General Teaching Council registration which will be available to teachers who pay a registration fee but which will be withheld from those who do not. [7488]

**Mr. Timms:** The General Teaching Council (GTC) is the professional body for qualified teachers. Registration will be a requirement if a teacher wishes to be employed in a maintained school or non-maintained special school; those who are not registered will be unable to teach in these categories of school. The GTC is responsible for regulating the conduct of teachers, an important element in raising the profession's self esteem and standing with the general public and promoting the profile of teaching. The GTC also provides advice on a range of professional issues to Government and others. In framing advice, we expect it to consult its members, thus providing an opportunity for registered teachers to influence education policy development. The GTC's advice on teachers' professional development and workload has already proved valuable.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of teachers in maintained schools have paid the General Teaching Council registration fee. [7489]

**Mr. Timms:** The General Teaching Council (GTC) registration fee is not now to be payable until April 2002. The GTC is currently collecting the details from teachers of how they wish to pay the fee next year.

### Grammar School Ballots

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what recent representations she has received calling for the threshold for triggering a grammar school ballot to be lowered. [7492]

**Mr. Timms:** We have not had any recent representations calling for the threshold for triggering a grammar school ballot to be lowered.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many petitions for grammar school ballots have been initiated in each of the last six school terms. [7493]

**Mr. Timms:** During the specified period, the Electoral Reform Services were requested to set petition thresholds as follows: seven in the autumn term 1999, two in the spring term 2000, and five in the autumn term 2000.

### School Funding

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will bring forward proposals for a new system of financing schools in 2002–03. [7538]

**Mr. Timms:** As part of the review of local government funding we have set up two working groups, with local government and schools partners, to develop proposals for a new LEA and school funding system. The work we have done with these groups has shown that we need more time to get the formula right. We have therefore decided to implement reform in 2003–04 rather than 2002–03, allowing us to see the impact of all the changes we will be making to local authority finance, not just those which affect education.

### Head Teachers (Threshold Application Training)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate she has made of the number of head teachers in need of training to assess threshold applications. [7713]

**Mr. Timms:** Last year, all head teachers in England were given the opportunity to attend training courses, and almost 24,000 heads took up this training. This year we have made available training courses for an estimated 1,500 new and acting head teachers, LEA head teacher equivalents, for other members of the leadership group (where large numbers of threshold applications are expected), and for those existing heads who requested further training.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many training seminars have been held in the last year funded by her Department to train head teachers who are new in their posts to assess threshold applications; and how many head teachers attended each one. [7714]

**Mr. Timms:** Training is ongoing. 60 training events are being held at 33 venues across England. 1,023 heads, heads of service, and other members of the leadership group have so far booked places. Numbers at each event are determined according to local need. Of those who have attended events so far, 98 per cent. have expressed satisfaction with the training received.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what costs were incurred by her Department in connection with training courses for head teachers to improve their ability to assess threshold applications. [7715]

**Mr. Timms:** This information is commercial and in confidence.

## SOLICITOR-GENERAL

### RAF Menwith Hill

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Solicitor-General how many cases have been presented by the MoD police to the Crown Prosecution Service in connection with alleged breaches of byelaws at land *(a)* on and *(b)* close to RAF Menwith Hill in each year from 1980 to date; how many have been authorised for prosecution; and of those, in how many cases the prosecution was successful. [6262]

**The Solicitor-General:** Ministry of Defence records show that the number of files submitted by the MOD police to the CPS in connection with alleged breaches of byelaws on RAF Menwith Hill during the period 1996–2001 was as follows:

| | *Total* |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 17 |
| 1997 | 49 |
| 1998 | 30 |
| 1999 | 32 |
| 2000 | 5 |
| 2001[1] | 7 |

[1] To date

The Crown Prosecution Service did not exist before 1986 and figures cannot be provided for periods before 1996, as earlier records have been disposed of in accordance with Ministry of Defence police policy.

Crown Prosecution Service case records are held by category of offence rather than by specific offence and it is not possible from the records to show separately in how many of these cases a prosecution proceeded or the result of the case. This information could be recovered only by examining individual cases files which are in storage, and the cost of such an exercise would be prohibitive.

### Departmental Properties

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Solicitor-General if she will list the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by the Law Officers' Department, broken down by those leased by the Department itself, its next steps agencies and its non-departmental public bodies, differentiating between purchases made as a result of the creation of new bodies and those purchases made by established bodies. [7818]

**The Solicitor-General:** Neither the Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department nor the Serious Fraud Office has newly let premises in the last five years.

The Crown Prosecution Service has, since 1996, acquired the use of additional premises on leasehold in 12 locations: Birmingham, Burnley, Carlisle, Derby, Harrogate, Holborn (London), Leamington Spa, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Newport (Gwent), Northallerton, Rochdale and Shrewsbury. The total annual rent of these 12 locations is £1,095,434.

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate has from February 2000 newly leased property in Old Queen Street, London SW1H 9HP. The current rent is £233,300 per annum.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Solicitor-General what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by her Department in (i) the current and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6588]

**The Solicitor-General:** Neither the Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department nor the Serious Fraud Office has any major building or refurbishment plans in the current or the next financial year costing more than £1 million.

The Crown Prosecution Service, is in the financial year 2001–02, refurbishing its offices at Workington, Carmarthen, Manchester, Portsmouth, Grimsby, Canterbury, Preston, Guildford and Leamington Spa. The total amount allocated to this project is £708,000. In addition, minor building work is being undertaken in 20 other locations at a total cost of £228,500. The projects in Portsmouth and Carmarthen are being carried out over two financial years. A total of £1.1 million has been identified as the total requirement to complete the second stage of each project during the financial year 2002–03.

### Departmental Contracts

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Solicitor-General if she will list the top 10 companies to which her Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6413]

**The Solicitor-General:** The properties occupied by the Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers and the Treasury Solicitor's Department are maintained by DTZ Debenham Tie Leung.

The following 10 companies have carried out construction and refurbishment works for the Crown Prosecution Service: Deedscan Limited; Farebother Engineering Services; G.H. Chambers and Sons; G.W. Interiors; Harold Palfreyman Limited; John Davies Interiors Limited; Rickland Limited; Sandell; Sykes and Son; and Thorndyke Limited.

The following companies have carried out construction and refurbishment works in the last 12 months for the Serious Fraud Office: P. J. Bond Construction Limited; Specialist Computer Centres; Wymer Electricals Limited; and Mitie Maintenance Limited.

### Bilking

**Margaret Moran:** To ask the Solicitor-General if she will estimate the cost of the legal services in prosecution of bilking at petrol stations in each of the last five years for *(a)* England and *(b)* Luton. [6386]

**The Solicitor-General:** Crown Prosecution Service records are held in aggregate form and provide no information on the cost of proceedings in respect of particular offences. An estimate of expenditure on prosecutions for bilking, the offence of making off without payment, could be arrived at only by an examination of individual case files, and this would involve a disproportionate cost.

### Christian Sweeting

**Harry Cohen:** To ask the Solicitor-General if she will make a statement on the handling by the criminal justice system of Mr. Christian Sweeting who was arrested on 16 April. [5506]

**The Solicitor-General:** The conduct of the police and the Crown Prosecution Service in respect of Mr. Sweeting is as follows. On 16 April 2001, at 0220 hours, Mr. Sweeting was arrested after being found in possession of an air rifle in a public place. The police charged him with an offence, contrary to section 16A of the Firearms Act 1968, of possession of a firearm with intent to cause another to believe that unlawful violence would be used.

Mr. Sweeting appeared before Torbay magistrates court later that morning. The police provided the Crown Prosecution Service with a file relating to the arrest of Mr. Sweeting. The Crown Prosecutor, in accordance with his duties under the code for Crown Prosecutors, determined that there was not a realistic prospect of a conviction in respect of the offence charged, and the charge was accordingly replaced with one under section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986, using threatening behaviour with intent to cause harassment, alarm or distress.

Mr. Sweeting's case was adjourned until 15 May 2001, and the Crown Prosecutor requested further information from the police. Upon receipt of that information, the file was reviewed again, and the Crown Prosecutor decided that there was no realistic prospect of convicting Mr. Sweeting of the offence contrary to section 4A of the Public Order Act. After discussion with the police, it was decided that the case should, therefore, be discontinued, and formal discontinuance was effected by a letter of 14 May 2001.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of his Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7233]

**Jane Kennedy:** The information requested is as follows:

*Northern Ireland Civil Servants*

Senior Civil Servants—retire at 60[1]

Grade A and analogous—retire at 60[1]

Grade B1 and analogous—retire at 60[1]

Grade B2 and analogous—retire at 60[1]

Grade C and analogous—retire at 60[1]

Grade D1 and analogous—retire at 65

Grade D2, temporary and analogous—retire at 65

*Northern Ireland Office Home Civil Servants*

Minimum retirement age 60 for all grades

Maximum retirement age 70 (though exception can be made).

[1] The Department may, in exceptional cases, retain an officer, who would otherwise be required to retire at 60, where it is satisfied that it is in the overriding interest of the service to do so.

With effect from 1 April 1996 new recruits at D1, D2 and analogous must retire at 60.

### Terrorist Activities

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with Northern Ireland political parties regarding the implications of the war on terrorism on terrorist activities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [7896]

**Jane Kennedy:** Security in Northern Ireland is not a devolved matter, therefore no discussions have taken place between the Secretary of State and Northern Ireland political parties on the implications, if any, the international war on terrorism will have for terrorist activities in Northern Ireland.

### Faith Schools

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what assessment he has made on the impact on religious intolerance in Northern Ireland of the separation of children of different faiths into faith schools; [7125]

(2) what percentage of the total number of children in Northern Ireland attend faith schools. [7126]

**Dr. John Reid:** Responsibility for this subject has been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly and is therefore no longer a matter for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

### HM Inspector of Explosives

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what reasons HM Inspector of Explosives did not include in his annual report statistics on prosecutions and convictions for offences committed under the Explosives Acts in 2000; and if he will publish such information in a consistent form for each year since 1993. [7113]

**Jane Kennedy:** I regret that information concerning prosecutions and convictions is not available. The processing of court statistics on the court proceedings database was suspended in April 1998. Court data are, therefore, not available for 1998, 1999 and 2000. I understand that work to capture missing data is at an advanced stage, but it will be some time before this information becomes available.

### Departmental Contracts

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the top 10 companies to which his Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6415]

**Jane Kennedy:** The Northern Ireland Office has contracted out construction and refurbishment work to only one company in the last 12 months.

The company which carried out the work is Portview Construction Ltd.

### Foot and Mouth

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how long it takes foot and mouth blood samples to be processed at the Stormont Laboratory. [2737]

**Dr. John Reid:** Responsibility for this subject has been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly and is therefore no longer a matter for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

## Departmental Buildings

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by his Department in (i) the current and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6590]

**Jane Kennedy:** The Northern Ireland Office has no plans for any building work in this or the next financial year.

The following refurbishment work has been scheduled:

*2001–02 financial year*

1. Refurbishment of 1,000m² of existing office accommodation at an approximate cost of £350K.
2. Refurbishment of 1,600m² of new office accommodation at an approximate cost of £900K.
3. Refurbishment of 465m² of new office accommodation at an approximate cost of £275K.
4. Refurbishment of 420m² of office accommodation at an approximate cost of £250K.
5. Refurbishment of 1,600m² of new office accommodation at an approximate cost of £700K.

*2002–03 financial year*

1. Some of the works listed may not be completed until this financial year.
2. There are no new refurbishment projects scheduled to start in this financial year.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Pre-legislative Scrutiny

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the President of the Council if he will list the pre-legislative scrutiny of Bills which has taken place since May 1997. [7588]

**Mr. Robin Cook:** Bills have been scrutinised in a number of ways, and by a variety of types of committee. Those draft Bills subject to parliamentary pre-legislative scrutiny are listed:

*Session 1997–98*

| *Draft Bill* | *Published* | |
|---|---|---|
| Proposals on pension splitting on divorce (subsequently part of the Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill) | June 1998 | Considered by the Social Security Committee |
| Draft Limited Liability Partnership Bill | September 1998 | Considered by the Trade and Industry Committee |

*Session 1998–99*

| *Draft Bill* | *Published* | |
|---|---|---|
| Draft Financial Services and Markets Bill | January 1999 | Considered by a joint committee especially established for the purpose |
| Draft Food Standards Bill | January 1999 | Considered by an ad hoc select committee |
| Draft Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill | March 1999 | Considered by a joint committee especially established for the purpose |
| Draft Freedom of Information Bill | May 1999 | Considered by the Select Committee on Public Administration, and an ad hoc Lords committee |
| Draft Electronic Communications Bill | July 1999 | Trade and Industry Committee |

*Session 1999–2000*

| *Draft Bill* | *Published* | |
|---|---|---|
| Draft Regulatory Reform Bill | April 2000 | Commons Deregulation Committee; Lords Delegated Powers and Deregulation Committee (both were also informally consulted on earlier drafts of the Bill) |
| Water Bill | November 2000 | Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs |

*Session 2000–01*

| *Draft Bill* | *Published* | |
|---|---|---|
| Export Control and Non Proliferation Bill | March 2001 | Quadripartite Committee (Defence, Foreign Affairs, International Development and Trade and Industry); Lords Delegated Powers and Deregulation Committee |

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the President of the Council if he will introduce proposals to enable Parliament to subject all bills to pre-legislative scrutiny. [7589]

**Mr. Robin Cook:** We have published more bills in draft since 1997, allowing greater scrutiny. This has clearly been beneficial and has wide support in the House. The Modernisation Committee will look at the legislative process as a whole. I see the attraction of routine pre-legislative scrutiny, but as recent events show it may be sometimes necessary to introduce emergency legislation without such scrutiny.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the President of the Council what discussions he has had on putting future pre-legislative scrutiny on the internet in order to facilitate public interaction in the pre-legislative process; and if he will make a statement. [7590]

**Mr. Robin Cook:** I support measures to make Parliament more accessible to the public and I am keen to facilitate interaction between Parliament and the public. We have made efforts to publish bills in draft so that they can be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny, which in itself allows greater public involvement in the legislative

process. New technology has the potential to assist in this and I welcome the fact that both Parliament and Government routinely publish material on the internet.

### Summer Recess

**Norman Baker:** To ask the President of the Council what proposals he plans to bring forward to improve scrutiny of the Executive during the annual summer recess. [6020]

**Mr. Robin Cook:** All select committees have the power to meet while the House is adjourned. The Government ensured that the House had the opportunity to establish departmental select committees by the time Parliament rose before the summer in order to ensure that the business of scrutinising government could get under way as swiftly as possible. If the Government had not given priority to this objective, the committees would not have been able to start their work until October.

In addition, the Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons is undertaking an inquiry into how the operation and activity of select committees might be made more effective. I look forward to contributions from all Members during the committee's deliberations, and I note the hon. Gentleman's concern.

### Select Committees

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the President of the Council how many representations he has had from hon. Members on the future of Select Committees in the last six months. [7304]

**Mr. Robin Cook:** I have received some twenty-three queries from hon. Members, and an additional five queries made by hon. Members on behalf of their constituents.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the President of the Council when he intends to bring forward proposals to change the method of election to select committees. [7305]

**Mr. Robin Cook:** The Select Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons is considering this matter in its current inquiry.

### Ministerial Consultation

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the President of the Council what discussions he has had with the shadow Leader of the House since his appointment; and if he will make a statement. [7306]

**Mr. Robin Cook:** Routine exchanges continue with the Shadow Leader of the House as they have with his predecessor.

## WALES

### Correspondence

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by his Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if he will make a statement; [7023]

(2) if he will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords. [7022]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** The effective handling of correspondence and parliamentary questions is an issue to which I attach great importance. While information is not available in the detail requested, general information on the volumes of correspondence received across Government, and on overall performance is published by the Cabinet Office. Figures covering Wales Office performance in 1999 and 2000 were published in the *Official Report* on 6 April 2001, columns 324–28W. Available information for earlier years can be found in annual departmental reports of the Welsh Office.

Information about the time taken to process Welsh Office parliamentary questions is not available. However, I have placed in the Library the performance of the Wales Office since its establishment on 1 July 1999.

### Foot and Mouth

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary with regard to aid to tourism in Wales after the effects of foot and mouth. [7735]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I meet the First Secretary regularly to discuss a range of issues, including measures to alleviate the impact of this year's outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

The Government, in partnership with the Assembly, British Tourist Authority and Wales Tourist Board, are taking every opportunity to promote tourism in the UK. The British Travel Authority has launched a £14 million advertising campaign, aimed at persuading tourists frightened by foot and mouth disease to come to Britain.

### Ministerial Visits

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement. [6895]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** Records of overseas visits are available only for the period since the Wales Office was established on 1 July 1999. Details are as follows:

| *Date* | *Destination and purpose* | *Participants* |
|---|---|---|
| 7–8 December 1999 | Brussels—Raising awareness of the role of Wales in the European Community | Secretary of State<br>1 Senior Civil Service<br>2 Grade 7<br>1 Special Adviser |

| Date | Destination and purpose | Participants |
|---|---|---|
| 30 March to 2 April 2000 | Dublin—Meeting with Taioseach and other Ministers | Secretary of State<br>1 Senior Civil Service<br>1 Grade 7<br>1 Special Adviser |
| 19–20 September 2000 | Brussels—Meetings with EU Commissioner, members of Committee for the Regions and UK Permanent Representative. Also attended official opening of the National Assembly Brussels office | Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State<br>1 HEO(D)<br>1 Special Adviser |
| 19–21 October 2000 | Bruges—Belgo/British Bilateral Conference | Secretary of State<br>1 Senior Civil Service<br>2 Grade 7<br>1 Special Adviser |
| 29 October to 1 November 2000 | Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia—Polycentric Europe Conference on regional government in Europe | Secretary of State<br>2 Senior Civil Service<br>1 Grade 7<br>1 Special Adviser |
| 26–28 February 2001 | Brussels—Bilateral visit | Secretary of State<br>1 Senior Civil Service<br>1 Grade 7<br>1 Special Adviser |

It is not practicable separately to identify the costs of these visits.

## DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

### Refurbishment Projects

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by his Department in (i) the current year and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6599]

**Mr. Leslie:** The refurbishment programme, either currently under way or agreed to, for my Department for 2001–02 and 2002–03 are as listed. The table excludes projects that are either still being planned or are awaiting financial approval to proceed.

*£ million*

| Project title | Period of project 2001–02 | Period of project 2002–03 | Cost of project |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ripley and Kirkland buildings; part of project to refurbish 22 Whitehall, London SW1 | 17.5 | 5.1 | 22.6 |
| Government Offices (GO) East; relocation | 0.5 | 0.8 | 1.3 |
| National Crises Management Centre | 0.2 | 1.2 | 1.4 |
| 67 Tufton Street, London SW1 | — | 1.4 | 1.4 |

Individual projects with a total value of under £1 million are excluded from the table. Figures exclude VAT, fees and the provision of general IT/office equipment.

### Devolved Administrations

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what his policy is with regard to *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in his Department giving evidence to (i) Scottish Parliament, (ii) Welsh Assembly and (iii) Northern Ireland Assembly committees; and to what categories of document he gives (A) full access, (B) restricted access and (C) no access to (1) Scottish parliament, (2) Welsh Assembly, (3) Northern Ireland Assembly and (4) House of Commons Select Committees. [7054]

**Mrs. Roche:** General advice on attendance of UK Ministers and officials at Committees of the Devolved legislatures has been published under the Cabinet Office's series of Devolution Guidance Notes (available at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/constitution/devolution/guidance/dgn12.htm.

The guidance applies equally to invitations from Committees of the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Government's aim is to respond promptly and courteously to such requests for information as they are received. The precise nature of requests could vary widely. The nature of the information provided in response will be judged subject to criteria as set out in the Devolution Guidance Note.

Requests are also assessed on a case-by-case basis under the terms of any relevant statutory provisions and under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (available at www.cfoi.org.uk/coptext.html), which also covers information requested by House of Commons Select Committees.

### Regional Government

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister on what date he plans to issue a White Paper on Elected Regional Government. [7164]

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mr. Hendrick) on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 80W.

### Duchy of Lancaster Tenants

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what his policy is towards farm improvement schemes proposed by Duchy of Lancaster tenants with farm business tenancies. [7875]

**Mr. Leslie:** I have been asked to reply by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Duchy policy is to look at each proposal on its own merits and if considered reasonable and viable for both the tenant and the Duchy the necessary consent would be granted. In assessing a proposal, due regard is given to the scale and nature of the improvements as well as the length of the tenancy, whether a farm business tenancy or Agricultural Holding Act tenancy.

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what measures have been taken to assist Duchy of Lancaster tenants whose businesses have been affected by the economic impact of foot and mouth disease. [7874]

**Mr. Leslie:** I have been asked to reply by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

There have been no cases of foot and mouth on any of the Duchy Estates although one farm in Whitewell was culled owing to a 'dangerous contact'. Form D Notices restricting animal movements have affected a number of Duchy tenants. The Duchy has maintained a close watch on tenants who are considered to be vulnerable throughout the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Duchy officials are always available to talk and discuss a tenant's concerns on a confidential basis.

The Duchy of Lancaster maintains a policy of sympathetic treatment of any tenant who is in genuine difficulty owing to external circumstances beyond their control and adversely affecting their business. Each individual case is looked at on its own merits and circumstances. Measures that have been taken include rental reduction, rebates and deferrals. The Duchy is also assisting some tenants financially who have chosen to take early retirement rather than continue within the agricultural industry.

### Correspondence

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what was, for each year since 1995, (1) the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords; [7052]

(2) the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by his Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if he will make a statement. [7053]

**Mr. Leslie:** The prompt and efficient handling of correspondence and parliamentary questions is an issue to which I, and ministerial colleagues, attach great importance.

General information on the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall and on overall performance is published regularly. The most recent figures, for 2000, were published by the then Minister for the Cabinet Office, Marjorie Mowlam, in her answer to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Watts) on 6 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 324–28W and in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Geraint Davies) on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W. On parliamentary questions, the information requested is not held in the form requested, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### London Weighting

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will estimate the total annual value of London weightings and London living allowances for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [6782]

**Mr. Leslie:** Since 1996, Departments and agencies have had responsibility for setting the level of pay for their staff. The Cabinet Office, the Central Office of Information, the Government Car and Despatch Agency, the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the Government Offices all operate their own pay systems.

The Cabinet Office consolidated London weighting into basic pay in 1997. At that time its value was £1,776.

The Central Office of Information consolidated London weighting into basic pay in 1999. At that time its value was £1,912.

The Government Car and Despatch Agency pays non-industrial staff working in London an allowance of £1,776 p.a. Industrial staff working in London had the £1,776 allowance consolidated into basic pay in 2001.

The Equal Opportunities Commission pays each person working in London an allowance of £1,914 p.a.

Staff working in the Government Office for London had London weighting consolidated into basic pay in 1997. At that time its value was £1,776 p.a.

### Ministerial Travel

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement; [6908]

(2) if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (A) civil servants and (B) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement. [6907]

**Mr. Leslie:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer provided today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, at column 824W.

## Departmental Staff

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many and what proportion of each Civil Service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the UK; what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement. [6784]

**Mr. Leslie:** The total numbers and proportions of staff respectively in each Civil Service grade and region in the Cabinet Office and its agencies at 1 April 2000 (the most recent statistics available) were as set out in the tables.

*Distribution of staff by grade at 1 April 2000*

| | Cabinet Office | Civil Service College | Parliamentary Counsel | Government Car and Despatch Agency | Security Facilities Division[1] | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *All grades* | | | | | | |
| Number | 1,316 | 242 | 47 | 228 | 149 | 1,982 |
| Percentage | 66 | 12 | 2 | 12 | 8 | 100 |
| *SCS level* | | | | | | |
| Number | 110 | 3 | 35 | 1 | — | 149 |
| Percentage | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0 | — | 8 |
| *Level 6/7* | | | | | | |
| Number | 209 | 85 | 2 | 3 | — | 298 |
| Percentage | 11 | 4 | 0 | 0 | — | 15 |
| *SEO/HEO level* | | | | | | |
| Number | 287 | 16 | 1 | 7 | — | 311 |
| Percentage | 14 | 1 | 0 | 0 | — | 16 |
| *EO level* | | | | | | |
| Number | 293 | 42 | 5 | 9 | — | 348 |
| Percentage | 15 | 2 | 0 | 0 | — | 18 |
| *AO/AA level* | | | | | | |
| Number | 418 | 96 | 5 | 11 | — | 530 |
| Percentage | 21 | 5 | 0 | 1 | — | 27 |
| *Industrial/Other grades* | | | | | | |
| Number | — | — | — | 197 | 80 | 277 |
| Percentage | — | — | — | 10 | 4 | 14 |

[1] Security Facilities Division figures and total include 69 non-industrial staff for whom statistics by grade are not available.

*Distribution of staff by region at 1 April 2000*

| | Cabinet Office | Civil Service College | Parliamentary Counsel | Government Car and Despatch Agency | Security Facilities Division[1] | Total[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *All Regions* | | | | | | |
| Number | 1,316 | 242 | 47 | 228 | 149 | 1,982 |
| Percentage | 66 | 12 | 2 | 12 | 8 | 100 |
| *London* | | | | | | |
| Number | 1,253 | 11 | 47 | 212 | — | 1,523 |
| Percentage | 63 | 1 | 2 | 11 | — | 77 |
| *South-east* | | | | | | |
| Number | 47 | 228 | — | — | — | 275 |
| Percentage | 2 | 12 | — | — | — | 14 |
| *Eastern* | | | | | | |
| Number | 16 | 3 | — | — | — | 19 |
| Percentage | 1 | 0 | — | — | — | 1 |
| *West Midlands* | | | | | | |
| Number | — | — | — | 1 | — | 1 |
| Percentage | — | — | — | 0 | — | 0 |
| *Yorkshire and Humberside* | | | | | | |
| Number | — | — | — | 3 | — | 3 |
| Percentage | — | — | — | 0 | — | 0 |
| *Wales* | | | | | | |
| Number | — | — | — | 12 | — | 12 |
| Percentage | — | — | — | 1 | — | 1 |

[1] Total includes 149 Security Facilities Division staff for whom statistics by region are not available

Since 1996, Departments and agencies have had responsibility for setting the level of pay for their staff. The current constituent bodies of the Cabinet Office, including the Central Office of Information, the Government Car and Despatch Agency, the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the Government Offices all operate their own pay systems.

Up-to-date information is available from payroll records, taking account of negotiated pay increases for 2000. This information also reflects the machinery of government changes that took place after the June 2001 general election, which included the transfer to the Cabinet Office of responsibility for the Government Offices for the Regions. Current average salaries, by grade, for the Cabinet Office constituent bodies are:

| | Cabinet Office | Central Office of Information | Government Car and Despatch Agency | Equal Opportunities Commission | Government Offices for the Regions[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCS level | 67,330 | 83,620 | 62,000 | 53,748 | — |
| Level 6/7 | 38,263 | 39,065 | 48,224 | 36,281 | 39,282 |
| SEO/HEO level | 25,030 | 28,198 | 29,000 | 22,583 | 24,213 |
| EO level | 19,035 | 19,533 | 24,826 | 17,078 | 17,145 |
| AO/AA level | 14,287 | 13,611 | 16,512 | 12,323 | 12,712 |
| Industrial/Other grades | 28,402 | — | 19,459 | — | — |

[1] Security Facilities Division figures and total include 69 non-industrial staff for whom statistics by grade are not available.

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will estimate the number of staff employed by his Department by region and nation of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6780]

**Mr. Leslie:** The total number of staff employed in the Cabinet Office and its agencies in each region and nation of the UK at 1 April 2000 (the most recent statistics available) was *1,980*. The breakdown by geographical area is as shown in the table. This shows analogous distributions for the whole of the Civil Service at that date and is drawn from the publication "Civil Service Statistics 2000", issued on 31 August 2001.

*Regional distribution of staff as at 1 April 2000*

*All staff (full-time equivalent)*

| | Government office region | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | London | South East | Total London and South East | South West | West Midlands | North West | North East | Merseyside |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Food | 3,030 | 770 | 3,800 | 1,210 | 440 | 880 | 110 | 0 |
| Cabinet Office | 1,520 | 270 | 1,800 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Crown Prosecution Service | 1,300 | 520 | 1,820 | 330 | 530 | 620 | 320 | 200 |
| Customs and Excise | 5,510 | 3,530 | 9,040 | 940 | 1,040 | 1,490 | 520 | 1,040 |
| Culture, Media and Sport | 620 | 0 | 620 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ministry of Defence | 8,640 | 22,620 | 31,260 | 22,770 | 8,010 | 1,320 | 490 | 840 |
| Education and Employment | 6,850 | 2,340 | 9,190 | 2,360 | 2,830 | 3,480 | 2,500 | 960 |
| Environment, Transport and the Regions | 4,350 | 870 | 5,220 | 1,760 | 790 | 730 | 370 | 80 |
| Health and Safety Executive/Commission | 660 | 140 | 810 | 70 | 160 | 150 | 70 | 1,290 |
| Foreign and Commonwealth Office | 4,600 | 40 | 4,640 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Health | 2,480 | 290 | 2,780 | 230 | 230 | 690 | 130 | 0 |
| HM Land Registry | 780 | 510 | 1,300 | 1,500 | 630 | 470 | 660 | 500 |
| Home Office | 6,990 | 1,180 | 8,170 | 250 | 740 | 400 | 80 | 960 |
| HM Prison Service | 4,720 | 6,930 | 11,650 | 3,050 | 3,830 | 4,270 | 3,040 | 780 |
| Inland Revenue | 8,370 | 6,370 | 14,750 | 4,000 | 4,080 | 7,920 | 7,640 | 3,840 |
| International Development | 720 | 0 | 720 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Intervention Board | 0 | 950 | 950 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 280 | 0 |
| Lord Chancellor's | 5,490 | 1,070 | 6,560 | 400 | 710 | 750 | 130 | 320 |
| Office for National Statistics | 730 | 640 | 1,380 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 540 |
| Ordnance Survey | 20 | 1,420 | 1,450 | 50 | 40 | 40 | 20 | 10 |
| Registers of Scotland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scottish Executive | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Social Security | 9,100 | 5,780 | 14,890 | 5,060 | 6,840 | 15,660 | 9,780 | 3,810 |
| Trade and Industry | 4,750 | 250 | 4,990 | 240 | 410 | 290 | 220 | 50 |
| Treasury | 830 | 0 | 830 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| National Assembly for Wales | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Royal Mint | 20 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Departments | 4,080 | 120 | 4,200 | 5,040 | 750 | 250 | 430 | 220 |
| All permanent staff | 86,190 | 56,630 | 142,820 | 49,250 | 32,080 | 39,504 | 26,780 | 15,440 |
| All casual staff | 1,790 | 1,090 | 2,990 | 610 | 615 | 815 | 800 | 330 |

*All staff (full-time equivalent)*

| | Government office region | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yorkshire and Humberside | East Midlands | Eastern | Wales | Scotland | Northern Ireland | Unreported and Elsewhere | All areas |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Food | 1,540 | 400 | 860 | 200 | 110 | 0 | 30 | 9,590 |
| Cabinet Office | 0 | 0 | 20 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 150 | 1,980 |
| Crown Prosecution Service | 600 | 380 | 300 | 350 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,450 |
| Customs and Excise | 910 | 850 | 3,730 | 490 | 1,270 | 530 | 50 | 21,910 |
| Culture, Media and Sport | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 620 |
| Ministry of Defence | 2,990 | 2,630 | 6,400 | 4,980 | 9,400 | 3,230 | 6,040 | 100,330 |
| Education and Employment | 5,630 | 1,920 | 1,940 | 1,890 | 3,360 | 0 | 0 | 36,060 |
| Environment, Transport and the Regions | 740 | 550 | 840 | 3,690 | 390 | 0 | 1,930 | 17,070 |
| Health and Safety Executive/ | | | | | | | | |

*All staff (full-time equivalent)*

| | *Government office region* | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Yorkshire and Humberside* | *East Midlands* | *Eastern* | *Wales* | *Scotland* | *Northern Ireland* | *Unreported and Elsewhere* | *All areas* |
| Commission | 450 | 270 | 180 | 110 | 280 | 0 | 0 | 3,820 |
| Foreign and Commonwealth Office | 0 | 0 | 820 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,470 |
| Health | 1,040 | 20 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 5,160 |
| HM Land Registry | 430 | 850 | 820 | 590 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7,750 |
| Home Office | 400 | 40 | 610 | 460 | 240 | 130 | 50 | 12,550 |
| HM Prison Service | 4,550 | 3,500 | 3,750 | 750 | 0 | 0 | 1,370 | 40,560 |
| Inland Revenue | 5,240 | 4,010 | 3,510 | 3,870 | 6,090 | 1,400 | 10 | 66,330 |
| International Development | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 430 | 0 | 50 | 1,210 |
| Intervention Board | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,230 |
| Lord Chancellors | 520 | 410 | 570 | 270 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10,640 |
| Office for National Statistics | 0 | 0 | 0 | 850 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,870 |
| Ordnance Survey | 40 | 40 | 50 | 30 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 1,820 |
| Registers of Scotland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,280 | 0 | 0 | 1,280 |
| Scottish Executive | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10,340 | 0 | 500 | 10,850 |
| Social Security | 7,590 | 3,500 | 3,350 | 3,880 | 9,160 | 10 | 10 | 83,530 |
| Trade and Industry | 310 | 190 | 200 | 1,690 | 230 | 10 | 10 | 8,840 |
| Treasury | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 830 |
| National Assembly for Wales | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,570 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,570 |
| Royal Mint | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,020 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,030 |
| Other Departments | 100 | 100 | 270 | 380 | 1,750 | 110 | 480 | 14,080 |
| All permanent staff | 33,060 | 19,650 | 22,220 | 28,080 | 44,390 | 5,400 | 10,740 | 475,410 |
| All casual staff | 680 | 340 | 550 | 950 | 1,090 | 40 | 1,600 | 11,300 |

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of his Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7226]

**Mr. Leslie:** Information on the normal retirement age and on compulsory early retirement or severance for my Department and for the executive agencies and public sector bodies for which it is responsible is as follows:

The normal age of retirement for staff in all grades below the Senior Civil Service is 60 years. This is also the minimum age at which there can be retirement with full superannuation benefits. Retention beyond age 60 is possible subject to departmental needs and the continued health and efficiency of the individual member of staff.

Staff in the most junior grades who satisfy these criteria may continue in service until they reach the age of 65 years. Others who have not completed 20 years' reckonable service at age 60 may continue in post until they reach the age of 65 or complete 20 years' service, whichever occurs first.

Service beyond these limits to a maximum of 70 years is possible at management discretion. The Cabinet Office does not retain permanent employees beyond age 70 although it may be willing to consider a case in exceptional circumstances to meet an essential departmental need.

The Senior Civil Service has a common compulsory retirement age of 60 years in all departments. Retention beyond this age may be allowed if in the public interest and subject to departmental needs and the continued health and efficiency of an individual.

Government Office regional staff continue as members of their parent Departments and as such remain subject to their retirement policies in respect of age, compulsory early retirement or severance.

Retirement policies in the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Government Car and Despatch Agency and the Central Office of Information closely follow the Cabinet Office model, with analogous discretions allowing for extensions of service.

As a pre-redundancy measure volunteers may be offered retirement on compulsory terms to avoid compulsory redundancy procedures. Staff may also be retired on compulsory early retirement or severance terms on grounds of structure, and on compulsory early retirement terms on grounds of limited efficiency. Early retirement applies to staff aged 50 or over; early severance applies to staff aged under 50.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Magistrates (Essex)

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many people applied to be magistrates in the north Essex area in each of the last three years for which figures are available. [6331]

**Mr. Wills:** Figures are not available for the north Essex area on its own. However, for Essex as a whole the figures are: 1998–99—160 applicants; 1999–2000—225 applicants; 2000–01—154 applicants.

### Departmental Properties

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate the total running costs for buildings used, owned or rented by his Department for each nation and region of the UK, and estimate the average cost per square metre for properties used by his Department as a whole, and by region and nation of the UK. [6795]

**Mr. Wills:** Buildings used, owned or rented by the Department fall into two categories: those managed by the Court Service and those managed centrally by the Department. The Court Service manages the estate of all of the Crown Courts, county courts, the Supreme Court estate and probate estate, the Tribunal buildings and also regional administration buildings. Magistrates' courthouses are owned or leased by the local paying authority on behalf of Magistrates Courts Committees.

The running costs and average costs per square metre of Court Service buildings by nation are contained in Table 1 and the running costs and average costs per square metre by region are contained in Table 2.

Properties managed centrally by the Department include central administration buildings and associated offices. The running costs and average costs per square metre of these buildings by nation are contained in Table 3 and the running costs and average costs per square metre by region are contained in Table 4.

The estimate of the average cost per square metre for properties used by the Lord Chancellor's Department is contained in Table 5.

*Table 1: Running cost of Court Service buildings by nation*

£

| *Nation* | *Cash Expenditure* | *Cost per sq. metre* |
|---|---|---|
| England | 198,795,765.55 | 267.59 |
| Wales | 7,817,644.14 | 171.77 |
| Scotland | 108,103.36 | 222.49 |
| Northern Ireland | 0.00 | 0.00 |

*Table 2: Running cost of Court Service buildings by region*

£

| | *Cash Expenditure* | *Cost per sq. metre* |
|---|---|---|
| *English region* | | |
| East Midlands | 8,734,161.88 | 257.14 |
| Eastern | 13,749,700.07 | 249.58 |
| Greater London | 76,764,257.36 | 331.10 |
| North East | 6,817,304.27 | 195.10 |
| North West | 24,874,647.12 | 224.66 |
| South East | 22,638,385.67 | 249.06 |
| South West | 14,255,109.91 | 256.66 |
| West Midlands | 15,516,402.06 | 251.32 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 15,445,887.21 | 226.55 |
| *Devolved nations* | | |
| Wales | 7,817,644.14 | 171.77 |
| Scotland | 108,103.36 | 222.49 |
| Northern Ireland | 0.00 | 0.00 |

*Table 3: Running costs for LCD by nation*

£

| *Nation* | *Cash Expenditure* | *Cost per sq. metre* |
|---|---|---|
| England | 16,834,052.00 | 372.81 |
| Wales | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Scotland | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Northern Ireland | 0.00 | 0.00 |

*Table 4: Running costs for LCD by region*

£

| | *Cash Expenditure* | *Cost per sq. metre* |
|---|---|---|
| *English region* | | |
| East Midlands | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Eastern | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Greater London | 16,550,947.51 | 380.70 |
| North East | 64,060.00 | 163.59 |
| North West | 114,958.78 | 291.11 |
| South East | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| South West | 104,085.28 | 131.66 |
| West Midlands | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 0.00 | 0.00 |

*Table 5: Average running cost of the Lord Chancellor's Department per square metre*

| | *£ per sq. metre* |
|---|---|
| Whole estate | 240.00 |

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if she will list the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by her Department, broken down by those leased by the Department itself, its next steps agencies and its non-departmental public bodies, differentiating between purchases made as a result of the creation of new bodies and those purchases made by established bodies. [7819]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The Lord Chancellor's Department has leased 34 additional locations over the past five years for various parts of the organisation and for varying lease terms. Five of the locations are occupied by the Department or its associated offices (the Legal Services Ombudsman's Office); 24 for its executive agencies (The Court Service and the Public Guardianship Office) and five for its NDPBs (CAFCASS and the Public Defender Service Offices). The creation of CAFCASS and the Public Defender Service offices prompted the acquisition of new properties; expansion of the organisation and/or rationalisation of the departmental estate drove the remaining acquisitions. Full details of the acquisitions are set out in the schedule.

*Lord Chancellor's Department property acquisitions 1997–2001*

| *Property* | *Location* | *Occupier* | *Demise* | *Annual rent (£)* | *Lease commenced* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Department and associated offices* | | | | | |
| Southside | London | LCD | 3rd Floor (front) | 454,850 | July 1999 |
| Southside | London | LCD | 3rd Floor (rear) | 302,400 | April 2000 |
| 30 Millbank | London | LCD | 5th Floor | 195,160 | February 2001 |
| Tower House | Bristol | LCD | Part 13th Floor | 22,889 | May 2001 |
| Sunlight House | Manchester | LCD[1] | Suite 303 | 101,007 | August 2001 |
| *Executive agencies* | | | | | |
| Lincoln Group Manager's Office | Lincoln | Court Service | | 6,250 | February 1997 |
| Taylor House | London | Court Service[2] | | 775,000 | July 1997 |
| Oldham County Court | Oldham | Court Service | | 198,144 | September 1997 |
| | London | Court Service (OSSCSC) | | 145,732.50 | November 1998 |
| Bangor Probate Registry | Bangor | Court Service | | 3,750 | January 1998 |
| Sheffield Group Manager's Office | Sheffield | Court Service | | 46,500 | January 1999 |
| First Avenue House | London | Court Service[3] | | 2,332,000 | April 1999 |
| Nottingham Group Manager's Office | Nottingham | Court Service | | 30,160 | June 1999 |
| Exeter Group Manager's Office | Exeter | Court Service | | 239,750 | November 1999 |
| Cambridge County Court | Cambridge | Court Service | | 171,000 | November 1999 |
| Uxbridge County Court | Uxbridge | Court Service | | 162,000 | December 1999 |
| Newcastle Group Manager's Office | Newcastle | Court Service | | 37,940 | January 2000 |
| Brighton Family Centre | Brighton | Court Service | | 176,000 | March 2000 |
| | Farringdon | Court Service (IAA) | | 190,320 | March 2000 |
| | Hounslow | Court Service (IAA) | | 190,035 | March 2000 |
| Ashford County Court | Ashford | Court Service | | 25,875 | June 2000 |
| | Bromley | Court Service (IAA) | | 3,000 | July 2000 |
| | Hounslow | Court Service (IAA) | | 125,440 | August 2000 |
| | Glasgow | Court Service (IAA) | | 206,624 | September 2000 |
| Haverfordwest County Court | Haverfordwest | Court Service | | 32,095 | October 2000[4] |
| Manchester Combined Tribunals | Manchester | Court Service | | 56,550.50 | March 2001 |
| Shrewsbury County Court | Shrewsbury | Court Service | | 47,000 | June 2001 |
| Breams Buildings | London | Court Service (IAA) | | 1,961,224 | July 2001 |
| Archway Tower[5] | London | Public Guardianship Office | | 884,000 | April 2001 |
| *Non-departmental public bodies* | | | | | |
| Palace Street | London | CAFCASS | 6th Floor | 57,720 | April 2001[6] |
| John Street North | Liverpool | Public Defenders Service (PDS) | | [7]30,000 | January 2001 |
| Albert Road | Middlesbrough | PDS | | [8]36,425 | February 2001 |
| Orchard Street | Swansea | PDS | | [9]23,500 | March 2001 |
| Priory House | Birmingham | PDS | | 12,000 | April 2001 |

[1] Office of Legal Services Ombudsman
[2] Immigration Appellate Authority—IAA
[3] Principle Registry of the Family Division
[4] Minor occupier in other Government building
[5] This lease was new to the Department but not new to Government
[6] For six months as a sublease from MAFF
[7] Rent free for six months
[8] Rent free for nine months
[9] Rent free for two years

## London Weighting

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if she will estimate the total value of London weightings and London living allowances for her Department; and if she will make a statement. [6794]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** London weighting was consolidated into basic pay on 30 September 1994, at which time it was valued at:

Inner London: £1,776

Intermediate London: £1,015

Outer London: £736.

A comparison between the national rate and the three London areas, based on pay range minima as at 1 August 2001, shows that on average staff in London receive more than staff in the regions as follows:

Inner London: £2,636

Intermediate London: £1,786

Outer London: £1,473.

As at 1 August 2001, the numbers of staff in the Department located in those London areas are as follows:

Inner London: 3,829

Intermediate London: 551.

## Staff Costs

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if she will estimate total staff costs for her Department and its agencies by nation and region of the UK; and if she will make a statement. [6793]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The total staff costs for the Department are as follows (baselines for 2001):

LCD Headquarters and Associated Offices: £34,504,837

The Court Service: £189,310,000

The Public Guardianship Office: £9,155,000

Total: £232,969,837.

## Civil Service

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many and what proportion of each Civil Service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the UK; what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement. [6796]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The number and proportion of staff in the Department is given in table 1.

*Table 1: Number and percentage of staff by grade level and region (as at 1 August 2001)*
*Lord Chancellor's Department*

| *Region* | *All grades* | *SCS level* | *Level 6/7* | *SEO/HEO level* | *EO level* | *AO and below* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Number of staff by grade and region* | | | | | | |
| *London* | | | | | | |
| Headquarters staff[1] in LCD, the Court Service and the Public Guardianship Office | 2,950 | 70 | 286 | 791 | 701 | 1,102 |
| *Court Service Circuits* | | | | | | |
| South Eastern (London)[1] | 625 | 2 | 9 | 58 | 198 | 358 |
| Supreme Court Group[1] | 1,821 | 4 | 55 | 186 | 493 | 1,083 |
| South Eastern (Provincial) | 1,546 | 0 | 7 | 136 | 242 | 1,161 |
| Midland and Oxford | 1,331 | 1 | 6 | 125 | 190 | 1,009 |
| Northern | 1,154 | 1 | 10 | 106 | 202 | 835 |
| North Eastern | 1,225 | 1 | 10 | 107 | 199 | 908 |
| Western | 888 | 1 | 5 | 74 | 154 | 654 |
| Wales and Chester | 581 | 1 | 5 | 72 | 83 | 420 |
| Total | 12,121 | 81 | 393 | 1,655 | 2,462 | 7,530 |
| *Percentage of staff by grade level and region* | | | | | | |
| *London* | | | | | | |
| Headquarters staff[1] in LCD, the Court Service and the Public Guardianship Office | 24 | 86 | 73 | 48 | 28 | 15 |
| *Court Service Circuits* | | | | | | |
| South Eastern (London)[1] | 5 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 |
| Supreme Court Group[1] | 15 | 5 | 14 | 11 | 20 | 14 |
| South Eastern (Provisional) | 13 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 15 |
| Midland and Oxford | 11 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 13 |
| Northern | 10 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 11 |
| North Eastern | 10 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 12 |
| Western | 7 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 9 |
| Wales and Chester | 5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Staff mainly based in London

The average salaries are as follows (as at 1 August 2001, following the 2001 pay review).

£

| *LCD HQ and associated offices* | | *Public Guardianship Office* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Pay band* | *Average salary* | *Pay range* | *Average salary* |
| A | 14,367 | 1 | 14,708 |
| B | 16,513 | 2 | 15,562 |
| C | 19,819 | 3 | 19,316 |
| D | 25,143 | 4 | 23,921 |
| E | 30,791 | 5 | 26,695 |
| F | 40,285 | 6 | 31,360 |
| G | 52,894 | 7 | 40,974 |
| — | -- | 8 | 53,980 |

*Court Service HQ*

| *Pay span* | *National* | *Outer London* | *Intermed London* | *Inner London* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 11,939 | 13,712 | 13,872 | 13,805 |
| 2 | 11,894 | 12,600 | 13,255 | 13,807 |
| 3 | 13,876 | 15,012 | 15,518 | 15,672 |
| 4 | 17,683 | 18,300 | 19,425 | 19,727 |
| 5 | 20,096 | 21,058 | 23,214 | 23,350 |
| 6 | 23,549 | 24,425 | 24,700 | 25,628 |
| 7 | 28,898 | 29,548 | 30,429 | 31,588 |
| 8 | 36,654 | — | 38,981 | 40,629 |
| 9 | 42,805 | — | 43,522 | 49,639 |

## Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the total amount of spending by his Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of his Department's total spending this constitutes; and if he will make a statement. [6797]

**Mr. Wills:** The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

## Contested Cases

**Mr. Lilley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what the average delay was in hearing contested cases in *(a)* magistrates' courts and *(b)* Crown courts in each of the last three years; [7851]

(2) what the average number of weeks was from committal to start of trial for defendants pleading not guilty from 1998 to date. [7847]

**Mr. Wills:** I refer the right hon. Member to the table which provides the information requested.

| | *Average waiting time in magistrates' courts between:* | | *Average waiting time in the Crown Court between committal and start of trial* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *charge and first listing* | *first listing and completion* | |
| | *Days* | *Days* | *Weeks* |
| 1998 | [1]38 | [1]45 | 18.4 |
| 1999 | 38 | 45 | 18.6 |
| 2000 | 38 | 46 | 19.6 |
| 2001 | [2]37 | [2]43 | [3]19.4 |

[1] In 1998, magistrates courts contested trial determined by an initial Not Guilty plea or no plea, 1999 and later years by the fact of a trial occurring.
[2] Survey conducted in March.
[3] January to June 2001.

**Mr. Lilley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of *(a)* wholly contested and *(b)* partly contested cases are acquitted in (i) magistrates courts and (ii) Crown courts. [7850]

**Mr. Wills:** In the calendar year 2000, 31 per cent. and 41.4 per cent. of wholly contested cases were acquitted in the magistrates courts and Crown court respectively. For the same period, the percentages of partly contested cases were 13 per cent. and 21.1 per cent. respectively. The table gives a breakdown of the figures for 1998, 1999 and 2000.

*Table showing the percentage of (a) wholly and (b) partly contested cases which were acquitted in (i) magistrates courts and (ii) Crown courts*

| | *Magistrates courts* | | | *Crown courts* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* |
| *(a) Wholly contested cases* | | | | | | |
| Contests | 62,858 | 57,639 | 52,077 | 18,874 | 19,116 | 18,099 |
| Acquittals | 17,294 | 16,263 | 16,122 | 8,350 | 8,463 | 8,214 |
| Percentage | 27.5 | 28.2 | 31.0 | 44.2 | 44.3 | 45.4 |
| *(b) Partly contested cases* | | | | | | |
| Contests | 4,298 | 4,262 | 3,882 | 1,641 | 1,338 | 1,378 |
| Acquittals | 396 | 530 | 506 | 411 | 344 | 304 |
| Percentage | 9.2 | 12.4 | 13.0 | 25.0 | 25.7 | 22.1 |
| *(c) Total contests* | | | | | | |
| Contests | 67,156 | 61,901 | 55,959 | 20,515 | 20,454 | 19,477 |

*Table showing the percentage of (a) wholly and (b) partly contested cases which were acquitted in (i) magistrates courts and (ii) Crown courts*

| | *Magistrates courts* | | | *Crown courts* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* |
| Acquittals | 17,690 | 16,793 | 16,628 | 8,761 | 8,807 | 8,518 |
| Percentage | 26.3 | 27.1 | 29.7 | 42.7 | 43.1 | 43.7 |

*Source:*
CPS Caseload Statistics

## Either-way Cases

**Mr. Lilley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many either-way cases heard in magistrates courts were contested in each year since 1999. [7849]

**Mr. Wills:** There were 23,022 either-way cases contested in the magistrates courts in 1999; 21,808 in 2000; and 10,471 between January and June 2001. The figures are for prosecutions by the Crown Prosecution Service only—figures for other prosecutors in the magistrates courts are not available.

*Source:*
CPS Caseload Statistics

**Mr. Lilley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many either-way defendants were elected for trial in the Crown court in each year since 1999. [7848]

**Mr. Wills:** Figures specifically relating to either-way defendants are not collected. However, the table shows the number of Class 4 offence cases committed for trial to the Crown court in each year since 1999. These figures cover all triable either-way offences but do include an element of Class 4 indictable-only offences as well.

*Class 4 cases committed by magistrates courts to the Crown court*

| | *Receipts* |
|---|---|
| 1999 | 61,155 |
| 2000 | 58,300 |
| 2001[1] | 32,752 |

[1] January to June

*Note:*
These figures include both triable either-way and indictable-only offences

## Departmental Expenditure

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the total expenditure was on *(a)* advertising, *(b)* polling, *(c)* focus groups, *(d)* design consultants, *(e)* caterers, *(f)* production of departmental publications and *(g)* photographs/photographers by his Department for each year since 1995 in (i) cash and (ii) real terms; what was (A) the annual percentage increase in spending on each category and (B) spending on each category as a percentage of the total departmental running costs; and if he will make a statement. [6914]

**Mr. Wills:** The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

## Contract Staff

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* special advisers and *(b)* press officers were employed (i) full time, (ii) part time and (iii) on a contract basis by his Department in each year since 1992. [6913]

**Mr. Wills:** The numbers of special advisers and press officers employed by the Lord Chancellor's Department since 1992 are as follows:

1992–97: no special advisers

1998–2001: one special adviser

1992–99: four full-time press officers

2000–01: six full-time press officers.

Press officers include the head of the information directorate. No press officers have been employed on a part-time or contract basis.

## Refurbishment Projects

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by his Department in (i) the current and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6589]

**Mr. Wills:** There are no new build or refurbishment projects for the HQ estate in the current year (excluding general fit out and maintenance work). There is however, one project due to start in the next financial year, this will be to refurbish Clive House in London. The contract is due to be let in May 2002, with works to be undertaken between November 2002 and November 2003. The budget for this refurbishment is £24 million, including works, fees and VAT, although this is being funded by the landlord under a private developer scheme.

Within the Court Service and associated offices, building and refurbishment schemes planned for the current financial year are in table 1.

The programme for 2002–03 has yet to be determined but schemes that will be carried forward from this financial year are listed.

Financial support is also provided to local authorities who have procured Private Finance Initiative contracts for the delivery of new and refurbished magistrates courthouses. During the current year, six new courthouses (arising from two contracts signed in 1999–2000) have already, or will be, opened at Beverley (new build); Kidderminster (refurbishment); Worcester (new build). During 2002–03 the extensive refurbishment of Redditch Magistrates Court will be completed. The total capital investment by the private sector in these facilities is £48 million.

The Department also provides funding to local authorities in the form of capital grant to undertake maintenance and necessary refurbishment works within magistrates courts. This funding is allocated to local authorities, so the Department does not undertake the works, nor are they directly benefited. The funds allocated in the current year for refurbishments in magistrates courts in England and Wales are in table 2.

The capital allocations for 2002–03 have yet to be determined, however there is a further £427,000 allocated to support the schemes approved in 2001–02.

*Table 1*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| *Building schemes* | |
| Probate Records Office PFI scheme | 6,770 |
| Sheffield Combined Court Centre PFI scheme | 73,200 |
| East Anglia PFI scheme | 377,839 |
| Bristol Combined Court Centre | 231,000 |
| Exeter Combined Court Centre PFI scheme | 369,000 |
| Manchester Civil Justice Centre | 100,000 |
| London County Court rationalisation | 100,000 |
| Blackpool County Court | 50,000 |
| Chester County Court | 165,000 |
| Field House (Immigration Appellate Authority) | 1,500,000 |
| Brighton County Court | 470,000 |
| *Refurbishment schemes* | |
| Nottingham Crown and County Court | 500,000 |
| Worcester Crown Court (external Security Works) | 100,000 |
| Manchester Crown Square | 500,000 |
| Liverpool Combined Court Centre | 500,000 |
| Royal Courts of Justice | 750,000 |
| Snaresbrook Crown Court renovation | 1,500,000 |
| Portsmouth Combined Court | 700,000 |
| Warrington Combined Court | 400,000 |
| Birmingham County Court (add. Courtrooms) | 250,000 |
| Leeds Combined Court Centre (new entrance) | 191,075 |
| Leeds Combined Court Centre (add. Courtrooms) | 300,045 |
| Basildon Combined Court (roof repair) | 250,000 |
| Kingston Crown Court (main concourse alterations) | 40,000 |
| Preston Combined Court Centre | 140,000 |
| York Probate Sub Registry | 120,000 |
| Ipswich District Probate Registry | 250,000 |
| Leicester Probate (relocation) | 80,000 |

*Building schemes to be carried forward from this financial year*

Sheffield Combined Court Centre PFI scheme

East Anglia PFI scheme

Bristol Combined Court Centre

Exeter Combined Court Centre PFI scheme

Manchester Civil Justice Centre

London County Court rationalisation

Blackpool County Court

*Refurbishment schemes to be carried forward from this financial year*

Manchester Crown Square

Liverpool Combined Court Centre

Snaresbrook Crown Court renovation

Basildon Combined Court (roof repair)

*Table 2*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Wolverhampton (refurbish custody area) | 241,500 |
| Bridgend (improvements to custody area) | 83,200 |
| Port Talbot (refurb. office and public access) | 5,380 |
| Brecon (improvements to custody area) | 41,400 |
| Llaneli (improvements to custody area) | 141,600 |
| Rochdale (improvements to secure area) | 57,550 |
| Pentonville (convert waiting rooms) | 57,500 |
| Cwmbran (construction of a new custody area) | 345,000 |
| Cwmbran (upgrade building) | 550,000 |
| Birkenhead (improvements to custody area) | 143,800 |
| St. Helens (refurbish holding area) | 32,200 |
| Liverpool (refurbish former warrant section) | 286,649 |
| Tamworth (general refurbishment) | 113,250 |

*Table 2*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Mold (general refurbishment) | 104,495 |
| Bangor (general refurbishment) | 83,938 |
| Caernarfon (general refurbishment) | 107,237 |
| Llangefni (general refurbishment) | 218,839 |
| Scunthorpe (refurbishment of 1st floor) | 386,490 |
| Hexham (general refurbishment) | 187,000 |
| Sunderland (refurbish of public area and counter) | 37,090 |
| Spalding (roofing and refurbishment) | 242,347 |
| Peterborough (refurbish custody area) | 37,413 |
| Trowbridge (refurbishment of custody area) | 44,700 |

### Departmental Contracts

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the top 10 companies to which the Lord Chancellor's Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6412]

**Mr. Wills:** There have been no contracts let for new construction or refurbishment within the HQ estate in the past 12 months. However, the 10 top companies used by the Court Service and associated offices are as follows:

1. William Sapcote and Sons Ltd.
2. David McLean Contractors Ltd.
3. Parkeray Ltd.
4. Walter Llewellyn and Sons Ltd.
5. Mowlem South Wales
6. Turner and Townsend Project Management Ltd.
7. Bailey Maintenance Services
8. Joinery, Construction Maintenance Ltd.
9. Interface Contracts Ltd.
10. EC Harris.

### Disputes Resolution

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how her Department will report to Parliament on progress with the Government's commitment to use alternative dispute resolutions where possible in resolving their own disputes. [7709]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor intends to make an announcement at the beginning of the next financial year, and has asked Departments to collect the following information: the number of disputes that have been notified during the 12 month period from April 2001 to March 2002; the number of those disputes where alternative dispute resolution (ADR) was used or attempted; the number of disputes where litigation was started; and the number of disputes where an offer of ADR was rejected.

### Access to Justice Act

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress has been achieved under the provisions of the Access to Justice Act 1999 in persuading suppliers of legal services to try mediation in appropriate cases in place of litigation. [7708]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The Legal Services Commission continues to support mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) for both family and non-family disputes. The number of mediations has been increasing steadily, and there were 9,076 family mediations in the period April 2000 to March 2001. The Funding Code's decision-making guidance encourages the use of ADR, especially where it avoids lengthy, contested proceedings in court.

The Legal Services Commission has worked with Mediation UK and other bodies to develop a quality standard for both family and community mediation services. The Mediation Quality Mark standard has been published for consultation. The closing date for responses is 2 November 2001.

There is also a leaflet on ADR in the recently issued series of Community Legal Service information leaflets.

### Act of Settlement

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the terms of the Act of Settlement 1701 with Articles 9 and 14 of the Human Rights Act 1998. [6484]

**Mr. Wills:** The Government do not consider that the Act of Settlement 1701 contravenes Articles 9 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Act does not, for example, interfere with a person's right to practise the religion of his or her choice. The Court of Human Rights has consistently held that it considers only the facts of a particular case and does not give judgment on hypothetical situations.

### Judges' Lodgings

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress he is making in reviewing the use and cost of judges' lodgings; and if he will make a statement. [6440]

**Mr. Wills:** The review will be taken forward in the context of relevant recommendations of Lord Justice Auld's report, which was published on 8 October, and in the light of the results of public consultation on its recommendations. In the meantime, the Lord Chancellor has decided to implement some administrative improvements in the lodgings network, including the use of more cost-effective transport, and to close the lodgings at Mold on the Wales and Chester Circuit. These decisions will save over £300,000 per year once implemented.

### Lay Magistracy

**Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on recruitment, retention and training and service obligations for the lay magistracy. [7143]

**Mr. Wills:** In general there are no particular problems recruiting or retaining enough magistrates. Over 5,000 applied to be Justices last year. However, it is harder to recruit or retain people in some areas than in others and it is necessary to encourage people from all walks of life to apply. That is why my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor's officials are considering how to develop a national strategy that will encourage more people to apply from as wide a cross section of the community as possible. Advisory Committees try to be flexible to accommodate magistrates having difficulties and considering resigning, and the Lord Chancellor

expects courts to try to accommodate Justices who may be seeking to combine public service with family or work commitments. The minimum requirement is for 26 half-day sittings, that being the minimum number of sittings to ensure magistrates keep their knowledge and skills current.

Training is of course necessary to equip magistrates to discharge their responsibilities effectively. The amount of training required differs from person to person and depends on identified needs but there is a core syllabus delivered to all magistrates locally.

### City Status Competition

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the timetable for the competition to determine city status to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Golden Jubilee; and when an announcement is expected on the names of the successful towns. [7167]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Telford (David Wright) on 20 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 787W.

### Magistrates Courts

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what financial and other assistance is available to people who would normally be summoned to appear before Salisbury magistrates but are instructed to travel to Chippenham court following the implementation of the Human Rights Act 1998; and if he will make a statement. [7373]

**Mr. Wills:** There is no assistance available which relates to the particular venue. Defence and private prosecution witnesses may be paid certain expenses of attendance, at the discretion of the court. Other prosecution witnesses, including the victim, are paid their reasonable expenses by the prosecuting authority. An acquitted defendant may be granted a defendant's costs order to cover any out of pocket expenses.

The location of courthouses is a matter for the individual Magistrates Courts Committee. The committee will take account, among other things, of the requirements of the Human Rights Act, although nothing in that Act requires cases to be heard in a particular type of location. Other relevant legislation, for instance, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, may require the Magistrates Courts Committee to consider questions of accessibility and the best way of providing a high standard of facilities to the population of the committee area as a whole.

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if she will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of her Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7241]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Information on the normal retirement age for the Lord Chancellor's Department and its executive agencies is as follows:

HEO equivalent and above (including Senior Civil Service): 60

EO equivalent: 62

AO equivalent and below: 65.

However, staff can stay on above the normal retirement ages at management discretion, subject to business needs.

### Correspondence

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) if she will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) House of Commons and (ii) House of Lords; [7013]

(2) if she will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by her Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if she will make a statement. [7014]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The effective handling of correspondence and PQs is an issue to which I, and ministerial colleagues, attach great importance.

General information on the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall and on overall performance is published by the Cabinet Office. Figures for 2000 were published on 6 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 324–28W and on 19 July 2001, *Official Report* columns 454–56W.

The time limits for answering written parliamentary questions vary considerably. The calculation of an average response time would not, therefore, provide a reliable indication of the timeliness of answers. The table shows the percentage of written parliamentary questions tabled to this Department, in both Houses, which were answered within the time limits set since the 1996–96 session.

*Percentage*

| *Session* | *PQs answered within target* |
|---|---|
| 1995–96 | 98 |
| 1996–97 | 95 |
| 1997–98 | 97 |
| 1999–99 | 96 |
| 1999–2001 | 98 |
| 2000–01 | 97 |
| 2001–02 | 97 |

The total number of parliamentary questions, in both Houses, tabled to this Department since the Parliamentary session 1995–96 are set out in the table.

| *Session* | *Number of PQs* |
|---|---|
| 1995–96 | 701 |
| 1996–97 | 350 |
| 1997–98 | 1,357 |

| Session | Number of PQs |
|---|---|
| 1998–99 | 925 |
| 1999–2000 | 837 |
| 2000–01 | 402 |
| 2001–02 (to date) | 154 |

### Criminal Courts Review

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he will publish the report of Lord Justice Auld relating to the court and criminal justice system. [7534]

**Mr. Wills:** Sir Robin Auld's report on the Criminal Courts Review was published on 8 October. The Government are grateful to Sir Robin for his very substantial and important review of the criminal courts at every level. The Government will seek views from the public and from those working in the criminal justice system so as to gain a broad consensus for effective reform. The period for comment ends on 31 January 2002. In the light of those comments, the Government hope to make early decisions on whether to adopt the Recommendations, and to announce them in a White Paper. The full report of the review has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and is on the Criminal Courts Review website: http://www.criminal-courts-review.org.uk, and the CJS website at www.criminal-justice-system.gov.uk.

## HEALTH

### Beta Interferon

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the likely annual additional cost of prescribing beta interferon to the same percentage of MS patients as the EU average. [7215]

**Ms Blears:** We do not hold sufficiently robust information on the public funding of beta interferon treatment in other European Union countries to make such an estimate.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will make his decision on the provision of beta interferon to MS patients. [7245]

**Ms Blears:** The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) Appraisal Committee further considered the evidence on the use of beta interferon and glatiramer acetate for Multiple Sclerosis sufferers on 25 September 2001. NICE has subsequently issued a provisional appraisal determination (PAD) to interested parties for comment.

The institute has stated that, to allow sufficient time to take proper account of the extensive comments received on the PAD, it now intends to issue the final appraisal determination to consultees towards the end of October this year.

### Rural Minds and Diverse Minds Programmes

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the funding of the rural minds and diverse minds programmes. [7244]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Department, through the section 64 General Scheme under the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, has funded both rural minds and diverse minds for the three years up to end of March 2000. The total amount was £225,960. There have been no further applications to fund these projects.

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of his Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7234]

**Ms Blears:** Information on the normal retirement age and on compulsory early retirement or severance for the Department and for the executive agencies and public sector bodies for which it is responsible is as follows:

Regardless of grade or job title the normal age of retirement for all staff is age 60. Some staff who transferred into the Department from the national health service retained the right to retire on NHS terms at age of 65.

### Hospital Waiting Times (Essex)

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the most recent figures for the last three months on the total number of people waiting for in-patient treatment in the Mid Essex hospital trust area; and what the most recent figures are for the last two available quarters for out-patient treatment in Mid Essex. [7166]

**Mr. Hutton:** The information requested is given in the tables.

*Total number of patients waiting for hospital in-patient treatment at Mid Essex hospital services national health service trust in:*

| Month | Number |
|---|---|
| June 2001 | 8,850 |
| July 2001 | 8,898 |
| August 2001 | 8,917 |

*Source:*
KH07 quarterly return/monthly waiting times collection

*Total number of patients waiting 13 weeks or more for an out-patient appointment at Mid Essex hospital services national health service trust in*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| Quarter 4 2000–01 (March 2001) | 2,125 |
| Quarter 1 2001–02 (June 2001) | 2,146 |

*Source:*
QM08 quarterly return

### Patient Security (Medical Devices)

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are being taken in *(a)* Middlesex and *(b)* the rest of England to tighten up procedures and security to prevent accidents or sabotage from objects being placed in tubes used in the conduct of operations and to protect patients. [7161]

**Mr. Hutton:** The incident at Broomfield hospital, and others of a similar nature in other hospitals, are being investigated by the Essex police force. Once the findings

of those investigations are available, procedures will be reviewed and, if appropriate, additional measures will be implemented.

In the meantime the following actions have been taken:

On 17 August 2001 advice was sent to chief executives of all national health service trusts (England) and chief executives of health authorities (England) reminding them of:

the Medical Devices Agency Hazard Notice MD HN 2001(02) on the risk of blockages on anaesthetic breathing system components;

to follow already established pre-employment personnel checks in existing guidance documents HSG(94)51 and strengthened and expanded in HSG(97)064;

to review security arrangements, particularly operating theatres and intensive care units, with reference to the guidance in the NHS Security Manual.

A further Hazard Notice HN 2001 (03) re-emphasising the above has been issued by the MDA in September.

## Spinal Injuries

**Alistair Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people attended out-patient clinics at spinal injuries units in *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 2000. [6752]

**Jacqui Smith:** The information requested is not collected centrally. We do, however, have some data on the incidence of spinal injury consultations for the national health service as a whole, as shown in the table.

*Finished consultant episodes (FCEs)[1] by main diagnosis NHS hospitals England 1995–96 to 1999–2000*

| *Year* | *Spinal cord injuries*[1] |
|---|---|
| 1995–96 | 11,578 |
| 1996–97 | 11,490 |
| 1997–98 | 11,433 |
| 1998–99 | 10,900 |
| 1999–2000 | 11,071 |

[1] An FCE is defined as a period of patient care under one consultant in one health care provider.

*Notes:*

Data in this table are grossed for both coverage and unknown/invalid clinical data, except for 1998–99 and 1999–2000 which are ungrossed.

The figures do not represent the number of patients, as one person may have several episodes within a year.

The main diagnosis is the first of seven diagnosis fields in the Hospital Episode Statistics data set, and provides the main reason why the patient was in hospital.

## Whittington Hospital

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the costs have been of preparing PFI bids for the Whittington hospital redevelopment. [6947]

**Mr. Hutton:** The costs of preparing the private finance initiative bids for the Whittington hospital redevelopment, have so far been £545,000 of which £252,000 were in-house costs.

## Eating Disorders

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines his Department has issued in respect of the treatment of eating disorders. [7798]

**Jacqui Smith:** We embarked on a radical programme of modernisation to improve access to effective treatment and care, reduce unfair variation, raise standards, and provide quicker and more convenient services. The mental health National Service Framework published in 1998 draws attention to the needs of people with eating disorders in Standards two and three.

The NSF implementation plan demands that health authorities have protocols for referral in place for those needing psychological therapies, and in February the Department published an evidence-based guideline to assist them. It includes coverage of eating disorders www.doh.gov.uk/mentalhealth/treatmentguideline.

We have commissioned the National Institute for Clinical Excellence to develop a guideline on eating disorders. It will cover primary and secondary care and children as well as adults. Information about this work is available on the NICE website at www.nice.org.uk.

## Correspondence

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average response time has been for him to respond to letters from hon. Members in the last two months. [6729]

**Ms Blears:** During the period of 23 May to 23 July 2001 the Department replied to 1,679 letters in an average of 15.01 days per case.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will reply to the letter of the hon. Member for West Derbyshire dated 25 July about the proposed closure of Staunton Harold hall. [7354]

**Jacqui Smith:** A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 8 October 2001.

## Nursing Staff

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* qualified and *(b)* unqualified nursing staff were working in the NHS in each year between 1990 and 2000 who were aged (i) under 25, (ii) 25 to 29, (iii) 30 to 34, (iv) 35 to 39, (v) 40 to 44, (vi) 45 to 49, (vii) 50 to 54, (viii) 55 to 59, (ix) 60 to 64, (x) 65 years plus and (xi) unknown. [7975]

**Mr. Hutton:** Data showing the number of qualified and unqualified nursing staff working in the national health service in each year between 1990 and 2000, by age-band, are shown in the table.

Age breakdowns for practice nurses are not available.

*NHS hospital and community health service (HCHS): nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff by age band in England as at 30 September each year*

*Headcount*

| | All ages | Up to 25 | 25 to 29 | 30 to 34 | 35 to 39 | 40 to 44 | 45 to 49 | 50 to 54 | 55 to 59 | 60 to 64 | 65 and over | Unknown |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Qualified* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1990 | 285,360 | 22,360 | 54,790 | 46,820 | 37,490 | 38,730 | 30,640 | 25,540 | 15,270 | 4,310 | 200 | 9,220 |
| 1991 | 293,770 | 20,610 | 55,420 | 49,160 | 38,910 | 38,360 | 32,080 | 24,670 | 15,290 | 4,420 | 250 | 14,590 |
| 1992 | 297,350 | 17,910 | 54,590 | 52,380 | 40,930 | 37,680 | 34,660 | 24,870 | 15,550 | 4,620 | 250 | 13,970 |
| 1993 | 293,380 | 14,830 | 49,670 | 52,920 | 41,340 | 35,980 | 34,580 | 24,070 | 14,810 | 4,370 | 190 | 20,620 |
| 1994 | 289,280 | 14,570 | 46,050 | 54,150 | 43,500 | 35,740 | 34,420 | 23,850 | 14,290 | 4,110 | 190 | 18,420 |
| 1995 | 298,650 | 15,660 | 42,650 | 55,600 | 46,240 | 36,830 | 35,520 | 24,720 | 14,380 | 4,230 | 310 | 22,510 |
| 1996 | 301,250 | 15,130 | 40,480 | 56,100 | 48,440 | 38,050 | 35,050 | 25,640 | 13,720 | 4,000 | 130 | 24,520 |
| 1997 | 300,470 | 13,630 | 36,910 | 53,230 | 50,100 | 39,600 | 33,830 | 27,450 | 13,830 | 4,420 | 170 | 27,300 |
| 1998 | 304,560 | 12,220 | 35,420 | 51,630 | 53,410 | 42,540 | 34,580 | 29,090 | 14,140 | 4,070 | 180 | 27,280 |
| 1999 | 310,140 | 11,340 | 34,110 | 48,540 | 55,520 | 46,340 | 35,820 | 30,560 | 15,310 | 4,330 | 240 | 28,040 |
| 2000 | 316,750 | 11,020 | 34,150 | 45,770 | 57,500 | 50,010 | 37,720 | 32,190 | 16,290 | 4,530 | 190 | 27,380 |
| *Unqualified* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1990 | 119,350 | 15,020 | 11,750 | 10,860 | 11,860 | 17,190 | 17,820 | 15,960 | 11,180 | 4,200 | 110 | 3,410 |
| 1991 | 131,720 | 16,740 | 12,820 | 12,060 | 12,540 | 16,960 | 18,450 | 15,860 | 11,420 | 4,600 | 180 | 10,100 |
| 1992 | 126,610 | 13,160 | 12,560 | 12,520 | 12,360 | 15,650 | 19,280 | 16,140 | 11,820 | 4,780 | 210 | 8,150 |
| 1993 | 130,430 | 11,690 | 12,450 | 12,810 | 12,650 | 14,950 | 19,100 | 16,240 | 11,880 | 4,870 | 210 | 13,600 |
| 1994 | 130,690 | 11,470 | 12,790 | 13,600 | 13,400 | 14,760 | 18,830 | 16,520 | 12,060 | 4,850 | 190 | 12,230 |
| 1995 | 113,190 | 8,500 | 9,770 | 11,440 | 11,450 | 11,680 | 15,180 | 13,820 | 10,010 | 4,140 | 220 | 16,990 |
| 1996 | 114,500 | 7,610 | 9,360 | 11,370 | 11,680 | 11,620 | 14,490 | 13,940 | 10,010 | 4,110 | 110 | 20,180 |
| 1997 | 117,110 | 7,310 | 9,120 | 11,260 | 12,210 | 11,830 | 13,400 | 14,620 | 10,010 | 4,360 | 140 | 22,860 |
| 1998 | 117,190 | 6,840 | 8,730 | 11,190 | 12,670 | 11,980 | 12,930 | 14,840 | 10,420 | 4,400 | 140 | 23,060 |
| 1999 | 120,960 | 6,700 | 8,750 | 11,160 | 13,260 | 12,950 | 13,010 | 15,050 | 10,890 | 4,600 | 170 | 24,430 |
| 2000 | 124,060 | 6,580 | 8,930 | 10,980 | 13,860 | 13,740 | 13,130 | 15,030 | 11,510 | 4,780 | 170 | 25,340 |

*Notes:*
A new classification of the non-medical workforce was introduced in 1995. Information based on this classification is not directly comparable with earlier years.
Unqualified figures include 'other' nurses.
Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
Owing to rounding totals may not equal the sum of component parts.
Figures exclude learners and agency staff.
*Source:*
Department of Health Non-Medical Workforce Census

## Parkside NHS Trust

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what investigation his Department has made into the risk of violence to health visitors in Parkside NHS trust as a result of implementing trust policy with regard to the use of the health visitor assessment tool; [6966]

(2) what plans he has to review the management capability at Parkside NHS trust following the report produced by Professor Sarah Cowley of Kings College, London into staff relations and managerial practice at the trust; [6972]

(3) what assessment he has made of Parkside NHS trust's use of a master patient index number on health visitor assessment tool records in respect of *(a)* client confidentiality and *(b)* compliance with the Data Protection Acts; [6769]

(4) what consultation there has been with health visitors' clients about how personal information was stored by Parkside NHS trust; and how the trust ensured that it complied with the Data Protection Acts; [6971]

(5) what advice was given to Parkside NHS trust on the impact of the Data Protection Acts on the collection of health visitors' clients' information in respect of client confidentiality; and what action was taken as a result of this advice; [7006]

(6) what consultation Parkside NHS trust has undertaken with health visitors' clients following the report produced by Professor Sarah Cowley of King's College, London into the use of a health visitor assessment tool; [6973]

(7) what assessment he has made of the supplementary report produced for the management of Parkside NHS trust by Professor Cowley about Parkside managerial practice; and what action he intends to take as a result; [6976]

(8) what response he has made to the report produced by Professor Sarah Cowley of King's College, London evaluating the Parkside NHS trust health visitor assessment tool; [6975]

(9) what assessment he has made of Parkside NHS trust's compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Acts in its recording of patients' information; [6768]

(10) if patient's confidentiality was broken by the use of the Parkside NHS trust health visitor assessment tool; [6965]

(11) what consultation Parkside NHS trust has undertaken with *(a)* health visitors and *(b)* health visitors' clients since the report produced by Professor Sarah Cowley of King's College, London into the use of a health visitor assessment tool. [6974]

**Ms Blears:** A health needs assessment tool (HNAT) was developed by Parkside Health national health service trust for use by health visitors to assist in the prioritisation of workload. An initial stage of development included focus groups that included both health visitors and their clients, prior to its piloting with 452 clients.

The HNAT does not require the recording of a client's name and address; instead it uses a master patient index number to link information gathered using this tool with the client's case notes, with which it is retained. No information from the HNAT is entered on Parkside Health NHS trust's electronic Community Information System. For a five-month period, a paper-based report which included master patient index numbers was compiled for monitoring purposes. In April 2000 this practice was identified locally as a potential breach of patient confidentiality and was discontinued immediately, and all documentation destroyed. All NHS trusts have been issued guidance relating to patient confidentiality and to the Data Protection Act 1998 and in upholding the Act are accountable to the Data Protection Registrar.

Parkside Health NHS trust commissioned an independent evaluation of the HNAT from Professor Sarah Cowley of the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing and Midwifery, King's College, London. Professor Cowley presented her findings to the trust and its staff on 15 March 2001. The trust established a working group of health visitors that informed the development of an action plan to address issues identified by Professor Cowley; the NHS London Regional Office is monitoring implementation of this action plan.

As part of that action plan, Parkside NHS trust and its partner organisations are planning a conference for staff and clients that will explore the health visitor's role including needs assessment issues.

Any specific evidence of poor management practice at an NHS trust not being resolved through local policies and procedures brought to the Department's attention would elicit prompt, appropriate action to remedy the situation. I have asked the NHS London Regional Office to follow up with Parkside Health NHS trust whether there are any identifiable issues within what I understand to be one of Professor Cowley's working papers rather than a formal report and to advise me whether such action is necessary.

Following Professor Cowley's report, Parkside NHS trust wrote to all health visitor staff on 26 April 2001 indicating that HNAT was still in a developmental stage and that they may choose to use it as part of their assessment and prioritisation of client needs but are under no compulsion to do so.

The trust has a policy on violence in the workplace that specifically addresses safety on home visits; this has recently been updated. There have been no reports made to the trust of violence connected with use of the HNAT; any such report would be taken seriously and investigated as required under trust policies.

### Social Services Standard Spending Assessment

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list in rank order for each local authority *(a)* the total standard spending assessment for social services and *(b)* the standard spending assessment for social services per head of population [7148]

**Jacqui Smith:** The information requested has been placed in the Library.

### PFI Pilot Projects

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what timescale he intends to take forward the three PFI pilot projects which include the contracting-out of the management of ancillary services. [7157]

**Mr. Hutton:** The aim is to complete the evaluation of the three private finance initiative pilot projects before the end of the year.

### Fibromyalgia

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what recent representations he has received on fibromyalgia; and what provision exists for the diagnosis and treatment of this disease; [7259]

(2) what plans his Department has to promote awareness and treatment of fibromyalgia. [7264]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Department has recently received representations from local branches of the Fibromyalgia Support Group requesting more research into the condition, and raised public awareness.

The national health service provides a wide range of services to which people with fibromyalgia have access, and patients are seen within a wide range of hospital specialties. Health authorities and primary care trusts plan and arrange the services available to people in their care, as they are closest to the people they serve and so best placed to respond sensitively to their needs.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Fibromyalgia was launched in March, chaired by the noble Lady the Countess of Mar. This should help increase public awareness of the condition.

### Special Advisers and Press Officers

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* special advisers and *(b)* press officers were employed (i) full time, (ii) part time and (iii) on a contract basis by his Department in each year since 1992. [6897]

**Ms Blears:** The information requested is shown in the tables:

*Table 1: Special advisers*[1]

| | *(i) Full-time* | *(ii) Part-time* |
|---|---|---|
| 1992–93 | 1 | 1 |
| 1993–94 | 1 | 0 |
| 1994–95 | 1 | 0 |
| 1995–96 | 1 | 0 |
| 1996–97 | 2 | 0 |
| 1997–98 | 2 | 0 |
| 1998–99 | 2 | 0 |
| 1999–2000 | 2 | 0 |
| 2000–01 | 2 | 0 |

[1] All special advisers are employed by the Department on a contractual basis

*Table 2: Press officers*[1]

| | *(i) Full-time* | *(ii) Part-time* |
|---|---|---|
| 1992–93 | 14 | 0 |
| 1993–94 | 14 | 0 |
| 1994–95 | 14 | 0 |
| 1995–96 | 17 | 0 |
| 1996–97 | 17 | 0 |
| 1997–98 | 15 | 0 |
| 1998–99 | 15 | 0 |
| 1999–2000 | 14 | 2 |
| 2000–01 | 14 | 0 |

[1] There were no Press Officers employed by the Department on a contractual basis

### London Weighting

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the total value of London weightings and London living allowances for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [6866]

**Ms Blears:** The information requested is shown in the table.

| *Allowance name* | *Total (£)*[1] |
|---|---|
| London weighting | 1,396,852 |
| Other London living allowances | 145,245 |
| Grand total | 1,542,097 |

[1] The annual estimated value of these allowances

*Note:*
August 2001 payroll data

### Antipsychotic Medication

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has commissioned in the last four years into prescribing of *(a)* traditional and *(b)* atypical antipsychotic medication to older people (i) in general, (ii) in care homes and (iii) in hospitals. [7393]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Department, through the health technology assessment (HTA) programme, has funded research to the value of over £1.4 million on antipsychotic medication in general. This includes a multi-centre randomised controlled trial on the cost utility of antipsychotics in severe schizophrenia, a systematic evaluation of the clinical and cost-effectiveness of "atypical" antipsychotics in the treatment of schizophrenia and systematic reviews of (i) comparative studies of depot neuroleptic agents and (ii) studies of oral versus depot neuroleptic agents for patients with schizophrenia.

The HTA programme has also undertaken a review for the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) on the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the newer (atypical) antipsychotic drugs in the treatment of schizophrenia. This includes some reference to older people. NICE has started its appraisal and the appraisal committee will produce the provisional appraisal determination this month and final guidance is expected in March 2002.

Through such measures as the National Service Framework for Older People and the Care Standards Act 2000, the Department has set out clear requirements for the proper management of medicines for older people. This includes specific reference to existing guidance on the appropriate prescribing of antipsychotic drugs and other medication for mental health problems.

### Continuing Care

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health *(a)* how many appeals were lodged against decisions under continuing care criteria, *(b)* how many appeals resulted in the NHS assuming funding responsibility in full and *(c)* what the mean and median number of weeks was an appellant waited from the date the appeal was lodged to the appeal decision for each (i) NHS region and (ii) health authority, in (A) 1998–99, (B) 1999–2000 and (C) 2000–01. [7411]

**Jacqui Smith:** The information requested is not available centrally.

### Delayed Discharge (Elderly Patients)

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people aged 75 years and over *(a)* experienced delayed discharge, *(b)* experienced delayed discharge due to awaiting residential placement and *(c)* required emergency readmission within 28 days of hospital discharge in Q3 and Q4 2000–01 and Q1 2001–02 in each (i) NHS region and (ii) health authority . [7392]

**Jacqui Smith:** Copies of the information requested have been placed in the Library. This does not include information requested on Quarter 1 2001–02 figures for each national health service region and health authority for the total number of elderly people aged 75 and over who experienced delayed discharge due to awaiting residential placement. From April this year figures on reasons for delay were only collected on the basis of patients of all ages.

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for *(a)* NHS regions and *(b)* health authorities, the number of elderly people aged 75 years and over for each quarter from Q1 1999–2000 to Q1 2001–02 experiencing delayed discharge because they were awaiting a domiciliary care package. [7387]

**Jacqui Smith:** The information requested has been placed in the Library.

### Free Nursing Care

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what arrangements he has made to deal with appeals against assessment decisions under his Department's free nursing care guidance; how nursing home residents will be informed of their appeal rights; and if residents will have access to advocacy services in such cases; [7389]

(2) what steps his Department has taken to inform *(a)* nursing home managers and owners and *(b)* self-funding and part-funding nursing home residents of free nursing care schemes; and when such information was sent. [7390]

**Jacqui Smith:** Guidance on free nursing care in nursing homes was issued to the national health service and councils with social service responsibilities on 25 September. On the same day, organisations representing care homes were advised that the guidance had been issued. A Department of Health leaflet, "NHS

Funded Nursing Care in Nursing Homes—What it means for you", has been issued to health authorities and councils to pass on copies to nursing home residents, their families and carers, nursing homes and general practitioner practices. A copy is also available on the Department's website at www.doh.gov.uk/jointunit/freenursingcare. Information abut the free nursing care scheme, including some frequently asked questions, was placed on the website when draft guidance was issued for consultation in July.

Both documents refer to the opportunities for individuals to have determinations reviewed and, if necessary, that decision reviewed by a local continuing care panel on appeal. Residents will have equal access to local advocacy services and, in respect of health services, from April 2002, to the patient advocacy and liaison service. These issues can be raised by and with the national health service nurse at the time that the registered nursing care contribution is carried out.

## Care Homes

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many licensed residential homes and nursing homes in England and Wales are operated *(a)* privately, *(b)* by local authorities and *(c)* by voluntary organisations. [7608]

**Jacqui Smith:** The table shows the number of registered private, local authority staffed and voluntary residential and nursing care homes in England. Information on the number of homes in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Assembly.

*Number of registered private, local authority staffed and voluntary residential and nursing care homes in England in 2000 (as at 31 March)*

| *Homes registered for the provision of:* | *(a) Operated privately* | *(b) Operated by local authority* | *(c) Operated by voluntary organisations* | *Total*[4] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residential care | 16,530 | 2,030 | 3,950 | 22,500 |
| Nursing homes[2] | 3,550 | [5]— | [5]— | 3,550 |
| Dual registered[3] | 2,330 | [5]— | [5]— | 2,330 |

[1] Includes small homes (less than four places)
[2] General and mental nursing homes, and private hospitals and clinics. Excludes dual registered homes.
[3] Homes providing residential and nursing care.
[4] Rounded numbers.
[5] Not applicable.
*Note:*
Figures may not add to totals because of rounding.
*Source:*
Department of Health annual returns

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those local authorities which operate residential care homes in England and Wales. [7607]

**Jacqui Smith:** All local social services authorities in England, with the exception of the City of London, operate residential care homes. Further details on numbers of homes operated by each authority are given in the statistical bulletin entitled 'Community Care Statistics 2000, Residential Personal Social Services for Adults, England', copies of which are available in the Library and on the internet at http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/sb0028.htm. Information on the number of homes in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Assembly.

## Health Authorities (Deficits)

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the deficit for the 2001–02 year was as at 30 September for each health authority in England and Wales; and what deficits have been carried over from 2000–01 in each case. [7623]

**Mr. Hutton:** Information on the financial position of health authorities in England at 30 September will be included in returns received in late November. However, all health authorities plan to achieve financial balance in 2001–02.

Health authorities now produce their accounts on a resource basis rather than income and expenditure. The provisional annual summarised accounts for 2000–01 show only one health authority, Bexley and Greenwich, failed to achieve financial balance. The health authority merged on 1 April 2001.

Matters for Wales are the responsibility of the devolved Administration.

## Out-patient Appointments

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients fail to keep out-patient appointments in each of the five years. [7617]

**Mr. Hutton:** In 2000–01, 11.4 per cent. of patients failed to keep their first out-patient appointments in England. We are tackling this by introducing booking systems throughout the national health service. By the end of 2005 all out-patient appointments and elective hospital admissions will be pre-booked, with patients agreeing the date (and time) for out-patient appointments in advance. Booking systems have been proved to reduce missed appointments significantly.

## Private Health Care

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital trusts have contracts with private health care providers; and how much has been spent on such contracts in each of the last four years. [7624]

**Mr. Hutton:** The Department collects information on expenditure of national health service trusts on the purchase of health care from all non-NHS bodies. These figures are not broken down further into trust expenditure on private health care.

Table 1 sets out the expenditure of NHS trusts on purchase of health care from all non-NHS bodies from 1996–97 to 1999–2000, the latest year for which figures are available.

*Expenditure on purchase of health care from non-NHS bodies[1] in England 1996–97 to 1999–2000*

| *Year* | *£* |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 88,662,366 |
| 1997–98 | 122,436,050 |
| 1998–99 | 121,953,905 |
| 1999–2000 | 134,783,788 |

[1] "Non-NHS bodies" includes:
non-NHS statutory/state sector, including any expenditure on health care with local authorities and at Ministry of Defence hospitals

voluntary (not for profit) sector, including any expenditure on health care with non-profit making voluntary organisations and registered charities. This excludes payments made under joint finance in accordance with section 28A of the NHS Act 1997 and section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968

commercial (for profit) sector, including any expenditure on health care with commercial organisations. Commercial organisations include companies where profits are distributable to shareholders and also organisations owned by the proprietor operating as a sole trader.

Table 2 sets out the number of NHS trusts reporting purchase of health care from non-NHS bodies from 1996–97 to 1999–2000.

| *Year* | |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 214 NHS trusts from a total of 402 NHS trusts |
| 1997–98 | 207 NHS trusts from a total of 425 NHS trusts |
| 1998–99 | 205 NHS trusts from a total of 402 NHS trusts |
| 1999–2000 | 192 NHS trusts from a total of 377 NHS trusts |

## Hospital Trusts

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those hospital trusts which have gained zero stars in the new rating system where the trust chief executive has been in place for more than 18 months; and if he will name those chief executives. [7596]

**Mr. Hutton:** The national health service trusts that gained no stars in the NHS performance ratings for acute trusts in 2000–01 are given in the table, along with the names of the chief executives who have been in post for more than 18 months.

| *NHS trust* | *Chief executive in post more than 18 months* | *Name* |
|---|---|---|
| Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust | Yes | Elizabeth Heyer |
| Brighton Health Care NHS Trust | Yes | Stuart Welling |
| Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust | Yes | Anne-Marie Dean |
| East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust | Yes[1] | Maggie Donovan |
| Medway NHS Trust | Yes | Jan Filochowski |
| United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust | Yes | Hugh Ross |
| University Hospitals of Coventry and Warwickshire (formerly Walsgrave Hospitals NHS Trust) | Yes | David Loughton |
| Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust | No | — |
| Epsom and St. Helier NHS Trust | No | — |
| Oxford Radcliffe Hospital NHS Trust | No | — |
| Portsmouth Hospitals NHST | No | — |
| Stoke Mandeville Hospital NHS Trust | No | — |

[1] Appointed 1 April 2000

## NHS Budgets

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on inflationary pressures on NHS budgets. [7598]

**Mr. Hutton:** The level of healthcare cost inflation for the financial year 1999–2000 was 4.5 per cent. The figures are taken from the national health service hospital and community health service (HCHS) pay and price inflation index. The latest year for which data are available is 1999–2000. Assumptions for future years are based on our inflation target and possible recommendations from the pay review bodies.

In comparison, NHS expenditure in England increased by 8.9 per cent. (6.3 per cent. in real terms) in 1999–2000.

## Medical Negligence

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been paid out in medical negligence claims in each of the last four years, together with the cost of accompanying legal fees. [7604]

**Ms Blears:** Figures on the amounts included in the National Audit summarised accounts for clinical negligence expenditure for the latest available years are as follows.

| *Year* | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 235 |
| 1997–98 | 144 |
| 1998–99 | 221 |
| 1999–2000 | 373 |

*Source:*
National Health Service summarised accounts for health authorities, NHS trusts and NHS Litigation Authority.

Changes to accounting policies mean that these amounts are not directly comparable.

The summarised accounts do not show, and it is therefore not possible to break down, separately what proportion of theses figures are for compensation payments and legal costs.

## Hospital Food

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement regarding recent changes to NHS food menus; and how much has been paid to outside consultants to advise on menus since 1997. [7603]

**Ms Blears:** The better hospital food programme, announced in the NHS Plan, is designed to improve the quality and availability of food in hospitals. It is a long-term programme, the first stage of which requires hospitals, by 31 December 2001: to ensure that their meal

services meet or exceed required standards and meet nutritional requirements; to provide a 24-hour catering service so that patients can obtain food when they need it; to adopt the national design for menus; and to provide on their menus dishes designed for the national health service by the team of leading chefs.

£401,334 has been paid to outside organisations in connection with the better hospital food programme. This has covered design costs for the new menu and implementation support pack, the establishment and full nutritional analysis of the NHS dish selector, recipe development and testing work and the development and management of the website. This equates to slightly more than £1,000 per NHS trust, and is a fraction of the NHS budget for catering. Additionally, central arrangement of much of this work will save the costs of duplicating work across the NHS.

Details of any payments made to outside consultants by individual hospitals are not available centrally.

### Cancer Treatment (Waiting Times)

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average waiting time between general practitioner referral and clinical treatment was for *(a)* breast cancer cases, *(b)* lung cancer cases and *(c)* lower gastrointestinal cancer cases in each of the health authorities in England in the last 12 months. [7591]

**Jacqui Smith:** The information is not collected. Collection of data on waiting times from general practitioner referral to treatment for breast cancer will be rolled out in 2002, as stated in the NHS Cancer Plan. By 2005 full implementation of monitoring will be in place for lung cancer and lower gastrointestinal cancer.

We are determined to reduce waiting times for cancer treatment. By December 2002 there will be a maximum waiting time of two months from urgent GP referral to treatment for breast cancer. This maximum waiting time target will be rolled out to all cancers by December 2005.

### Overseas Treatment

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he anticipates issuing guidelines to health authorities and doctors enabling them to sign contracts with providers of medical care in other European Union countries; and what types of establishments in the EU will be considered. [7602]

**Mr. Milburn:** On 12 July the European Court of Justice ruled on joined cases C-157/99 Geraets-Smits and Peerbooms and case C-368/98 Vanbraekel that some hospital services may fall within European Community single market rules if they are provided for remuneration.

Following this ruling, the Government have announced that National Health Service commissioners will be able to commission care for NHS patients from providers in other member states of the European Union, as part of their wider efforts to reduce waiting times.

The decision to treat NHS patients in mainland Europe will be made locally as part of normal NHS commissioning arrangements. The Department is working closely with NHS managers and clinicians in Portsmouth, East Kent, West Sussex and East Surrey to test systems for offering patients treatment in other European countries. Lessons learned from these areas on the legal, clinical and quality issues involved in sending NHS patients abroad for treatment will inform guidance, which will be sent out to the service later this year.

### "Removing Barriers"

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how his Department ensured that the report, "Removing Barriers", published by the Local Government Association, was taken into account during the 1997–98 comprehensive spending review; and which of its recommendations have been implemented. [8050]

**Jacqui Smith:** In reaching our view of what to include in the comprehensive spending review 1998 we consulted widely and took into account the views of the Local Government Association (LGA) and other stakeholders.

The LGA report "Removing Barriers", which was published in 1997, highlighted the need for an active dialogue between the Department and the Department of Social Security (Department for Work and Pensions) on the interaction of the benefit system, and the local management of statutory welfare duties.

Departmental Ministers and officials regularly meet their opposite numbers in DWP, and with LGA representatives to discuss issues of mutual interest.

In the 1998 CSR we secured increased resources for social services averaging 3.1 per cent. a year in real terms for the years 1999–2000 to 2001–02.

### Intermediate Care

**Mr. Colman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to build hospitals devoted to intermediate care. [8023]

**Jacqui Smith:** The NHS Plan set the target of an extra 5,000 intermediate care beds by 2003–04. These will be provided in a range of settings—in existing acute and community hospitals, in redesigned nursing homes or in purpose built facilities. The precise arrangements will be a matter for local decision. As part of our funding for intermediate care over the next two years, around £65 million will be for capital investment to support this development.

### General Practitioners

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners *(a)* left and *(b)* were recruited into the NHS in each of the last four years. [7599]

**Mr. Hutton:** The information requested is shown in the table.

*General practitioners: Analysis of work force—joiners and leavers 1996–97 to 1999–2000—England*

*Number*

| | | *1996–97* | | *1997–98* | | *1998–99* | | *1999–2000* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UPEs[1, 2] | 26,855 | | 27,099 | | 27,392 | | 27,591 | | 27,704 |
| Joiners | | 1,302 | | 1,333 | | 1,229 | | 1,203 | |
| New joiners | | 1,029 | | 1,069 | | 967 | | 958 | |
| *of which to:* | | | | | | | | | |
| GMS | | 1,029 | | 1,047 | | 920 | | 886 | |
| PMS | | — | | 22 | | 47 | | 72 | |
| Re-joiners | | 273 | | 264 | | 262 | | 245 | |
| *of which to:* | | | | | | | | | |
| GMS | | 273 | | 256 | | 249 | | 219 | |
| PMS | | — | | 8 | | 13 | | 26 | |
| *UPEs transferring directly from:* | | | | | | | | | |
| GMS to PMS | | — | | 331 | | 501 | | 394 | |
| PMS to GMS | | — | | 0 | | 24 | | 73 | |
| Leavers | | 1,058 | | 1,040 | | 1,030 | | 1,090 | |
| *of which from:* | | | | | | | | | |
| GMS | | 1,058 | | 1,040 | | 1,013 | | 1,058 | |
| PMS | | — | | — | | 17 | | 32 | |
| Change in UPEs | | 244 | | 293 | | 199 | | 113 | |

[1] UPEs include GMS Unrestricted Principals, PMS Contracted GPs and PMS Salaried GPs

[2] Numbers of UPEs at 1 October each year from 1996 to 1999 and 30 September from 2000. Other rows relate to changes between successive October/September Censuses

*Source:*

Department of Health Statistical Bulletin "Statistics for General Medical Practitioners in England 1999–2000"

## Waiting Lists

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients in each health authority in England have been waiting for treatment for more than 12 months. [7625]

**Mr. Hutton:** The table shows, for each health authority in England, the percentage of patients who were waiting 12 months or more for admission to hospital on 31 August 2001.

As part of the NHS plan, the national health service is working towards reducing the current maximum in-patient wait of 18 months to 14 months by March 2002, 12 months by March 2003, nine months by March 2004 and then ultimately six months by the end of 2005.

| *Health authority* | *Percentage waiting more than 12 months* |
|---|---|
| Hillingdon | 5.8 |
| Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster | 1.8 |
| Redbridge and Waltham Forest | 8.3 |
| Bedfordshire | 7.0 |
| Berkshire | 3.7 |
| Buckinghamshire | 5.6 |
| Croydon | 9.6 |
| East Kent | 6.9 |
| West Kent | 5.3 |
| Kingston and Richmond | 6.1 |
| Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham | 8.5 |
| Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth | 5.4 |
| East Surrey | 8.7 |
| West Surrey | 10.9 |
| East Sussex, Brighton and Hove | 6.4 |
| West Sussex | 9.3 |
| Barking and Havering | 6.1 |
| Brent and Harrow | 6.0 |
| Camden and Islington | 4.4 |
| Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow | 5.2 |
| East London and City | 4.7 |
| North Essex | 6.1 |
| South Essex | 3.9 |
| South Lancashire | 2.4 |
| Liverpool | 4.0 |
| Manchester | 6.3 |
| Morecambe Bay | 2.6 |
| St. Helens and Knowsley | 3.4 |
| Salford and Trafford | 6.4 |
| Sefton | 3.3 |
| Stockport | 3.8 |
| West Pennine | 2.4 |
| Northamptonshire | 4.8 |
| Oxfordshire | 4.6 |
| Suffolk | 4.6 |
| Barnsley | 0.4 |
| North Derbyshire | 0.7 |
| South Derbyshire | 2.6 |
| Doncaster | 0.3 |
| Leicestershire | 2.6 |
| Lincolnshire | 4.3 |
| North Nottinghamshire | 1.0 |
| Nottingham | 2.3 |
| Rotherham | 0.4 |
| Sheffield | 1.2 |
| Bury and Rochdale | 3.2 |
| North Cheshire | 7.9 |
| South Cheshire | 4.7 |
| East Lancashire | 1.6 |
| North West Lancashire | 1.5 |
| North and Mid Hampshire | 4.9 |
| Southampton and South West Hampshire | 6.4 |
| Somerset | 3.4 |
| South and West Devon | 6.6 |
| Wiltshire | 5.9 |

| Health authority | Percentage waiting more than 12 months |
|---|---|
| Avon | 6.5 |
| Birmingham | 2.0 |
| Wigan and Bolton | 3.7 |
| Wirral | 2.8 |
| Bradford | 0.8 |
| County Durham and Darlington | 0.9 |
| East Riding and Hull | 3.5 |
| Gateshead and South Tyneside | 0.5 |
| Leeds | 3.0 |
| Newcastle and North Tyneside | 1.1 |
| North Cumbria | 1.8 |
| South Humber | 0.8 |
| Northumberland | 0.9 |
| Sunderland | 0.5 |
| Tees | 0.4 |
| Wakefield | 2.3 |
| North Yorkshire | 1.2 |
| Calderdale and Kirklees | 0.8 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 5.1 |
| Dorset | 0.1 |
| North and East Devon | 5.5 |
| Gloucestershire | 1.6 |
| Coventry | 2.7 |
| Dudley | 2.2 |
| Herefordshire | 3.7 |
| Sandwell | 0.8 |
| Shropshire | 3.5 |
| Solihull | 1.2 |
| North Staffordshire | 2.9 |
| South Staffordshire | 5.2 |
| Walsall | 0.8 |
| Warwickshire | 1.1 |
| Wolverhampton | 1.4 |
| Worcestershire | 5.0 |
| Cambridgeshire | 4.2 |
| Norfolk | 5.3 |
| Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and South East Hampshire | 6.3 |
| Barnet, Enfield and Haringey | 6.9 |
| Hertfordshire | 6.1 |
| Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich | 5.8 |
| England total | 4.4 |

### Epoetin

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information his Department has collated on the availability of Epoetin to treat anaemia in renal disease in England; and if he will make a statement; [6493]

(2) what methods his Department uses to monitor access to Epoetin by patients who require treatment for anaemia in renal disease in England; [6494]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the role of Epoetin in treating anaemia in renal disease; [6492]

(4) what assessment his Department has made of the importance of treating anaemia in renal diseases; and if he will make a statement. [6491]

**Jacqui Smith:** There is much published information to show that the successful treatment of anaemia in renal disease can improve patients' well-being and their quality of life. The majority of renal patients require epoetin to attain recommended haemoglobin levels. Data on the availability of epoetin are collected in surveys commissioned by the Department of Health. The last survey was conducted in 1998 and the results were published last year in the 3rd annual report from the United Kingdom Renal Registry (copies available in the Library). This showed that 74 per cent. of all dialysis patients were being prescribed epoetin.

### Diabetes

**Ms Oona King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish the diabetes National Service Framework. [8067]

**Jacqui Smith:** We will be publishing a standards document this autumn, which will set out national standards to improve the quality of care for people with diabetes. The standards document will include the aims of the National Service Framework, the underpinning evidence and proposed service models. It will indicate the broad direction of travel over what will be a ten year programme, starting in April 2003.

We will publish the delivery strategy (including milestones) for the Diabetes NSF next summer.

We shall also be setting up an Implementation Group this autumn, which will work with the national health service and other interested parties to develop a delivery strategy for the Diabetes NSF that takes account of the changing roles and responsibilities of NHS organisations emerging from "Shifting the Balance of Power". The agreed delivery strategy, including milestones, service models, performance indicators and underpinning programmes, will be published next summer.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### High Hedges

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if the Government will introduce legislation to regulate the size of high hedges. [4928]

**Ms Keeble** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I have been asked to reply.

The Government will introduce legislation giving local authorities powers to deal with complaints about high hedges in residential areas as soon as there is space in the parliamentary timetable.

### Supermarkets

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what powers the Government have to stop monopolistic practices by supermarkets in respect of farmers. [6244]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** I have been asked to reply.

The Competition Act 1998 and the Fair Trading Act 1973 provide power to investigate and take action against abuse of dominate position or monopolistic behaviour.

Complaints under the Acts are a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading to investigate.

### Ministerial Responsibilities

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the division of responsibility for climate change between Ministers in her Department and the Deputy Prime Minister. [198]

**Margaret Beckett** *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* As Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, I will represent the UK at meetings and negotiations on international climate change issues, along with my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment, as I did in Bonn. The Deputy Prime Minister will continue to play a role in international climate change discussions and negotiations on behalf of the Prime Minister.

### BSE, Japan

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the Government will publish the European Commission report into BSE risks in Japan. [200]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 19 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

### Departmental Reorganisation

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the likely cost to the taxpayer of replacing the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. [203]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 19 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment the Government made of the impact of separating responsibility for rural affairs and land use planning into different Government Departments. [279]

**Alun Michael** *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* The Government's assessment is that bringing together responsibility for the environment, food and farming and rural affairs in a single Department will make a major contribution to the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas. DEFRA's remit includes the promotion of sustainable development across Government. The planning system remains a key instrument in delivering the Government's sustainable development objectives, and we are putting in place mechanisms to ensure continued close working with the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.

### Climate Change

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans *(a)* she and *(b)* Ministers in her Department have to visit international conferences relating to climate change in the next 12 months. [804]

**Mr. Meacher:** Ministers from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will attend the Seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in November this year, and the G8 Environment Ministers Conference, at which climate change will be discussed, in April 2002.

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what role she intends to take in negotiations at the international climate change talks in Bonn in July; and if she will make a statement. [4010]

**Margaret Beckett** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I was the head of the UK delegation during the recent climate change talks in Bonn. I played a full role in the negotiations, including in the all-night discussions which led to political agreement on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what *(a)* assessment and *(b)* monitoring her Department plans of the impact of the climate change levy her Department has made on (i) greenhouse gas emissions and (ii) businesses; and if she will make a statement. [3994]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The climate change levy, including climate change agreements, is expected to deliver reductions of 5MtC per annum by 2010. The levy is, overall, revenue neutral in that the receipts are being recycled to business through a 0.3 percentage point reduction in national insurance contributions and a programme of assistance to business to improve energy efficiency. The levy was introduced on 1 April 2001 and it is therefore too early to monitor impact. The operation of the levy will be kept under review.

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what contribution to the reduction in greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide under the climate change strategy is expected from *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* transport (excluding aviation), *(c)* aviation, *(d)* industry, *(e)* business, *(f)* households, and *(g)* other activities; and if she will make a statement. [3993]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The UK's climate change programme that was published in November 2000 sets out full details of all the policies and measures that are reducing the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. The UK's baseline projections, that include the effect of some policies that have been introduced since Kyoto in 1997, estimate that the UK's emissions could be about 15 per cent. below 1990 levels by 2010. We estimate that the additional policies outlined in the programme could reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to 23 per cent. below 1990 levels by 2010.

The table provides details of the savings from additional policies that we estimate could be delivered from each sector.

| Sector/Policy | MtC[1] |
|---|---|
| Agriculture—afforestation | 0.6 |
| Transport—EU-level voluntary agreements on $CO_2$ from cars; 10-Year-Plan; action in Scotland and Wales. | 5.7 |
| Business—climate change agreements; energy efficiency measures under the levy package; emissions trading. | 5.0 |
| Business and households—reform of Building Regulations. | 1.3 |
| Households—improvements to domestic energy efficiency, including the Energy Efficiency Commitment. | 2.6 to 3.7 |
| Households—action to replace community heating systems; New HEES; appliance standards and labelling. | 1.4 |
| Other activities—public sector targets; action by the Scottish Executive. | 0.6 |

[1] Million tonnes of carbon equivalent.

The UK's baseline projections include the effect of the fuel duty escalator to 1999 (1–2.5 MtC), the price effect of the climate change levy (2 MtC) and delivery of the 10 per cent. renewables target (2.5 MtC). It has not been possible to identify separate carbon savings from aviation, although action is being taken to tackle the rising emissions from this sector. Reduced emissions of methane and nitrous oxide from the agriculture sector, and of nitrous oxide and the fluorinated gases from the industrial sector, have also already been included in baseline projections.

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress her Department has made towards meeting the objectives of the Government's climate change strategy; and if she will make a statement. [3992]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The Government have continued to take action to tackle climate change. In 1999, the last year for which figures are available, the UK's greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced to 14.4 per cent. below 1990 levels.

The Government have also made good progress towards implementing the policies and measures that were set out in the climate change programme. For example, the climate change levy package has been introduced, the Carbon Trust and the Climate Change Projects Office have been set up; substantial funds have been made available to support renewable energy projects; and a draft framework for a greenhouse gas emissions trading scheme was published in May, with trading due to begin in April 2002. The Government are also offering an incentive of £215 million over five years to companies joining the scheme.

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the recent Royal Society report, "The Role of Land Carbon Sinks in Mitigating Global Climate Change". [4039]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Royal Society's report is a valuable contribution to the debate on how to respond to the threat of climate change. In particular we share the Society's view that, because of the finite size, uncertainty and potential reversibility, sink enhancement should not divert resources from technologies which reduce emissions. We also agree with the Society that steps should be taken to manage forests and crops in a way that protects and enhances their role as a carbon sink in a manner compatible with other goals of sustainable development, and accept the need to increase accuracy of monitoring and verification of land sinks. The Society's conclusions are consistent with the policy that the UK pursues in the international climate negotiations, and with UK policies for sustainable agriculture and forestry. We congratulate the Society on timely publication of the report shortly before the successful resumption of the climate change negotiations in July.

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on her Department's plans in respect of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change document on climate change published on 12 July. [4655]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 17 July 2001]:* The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) documents published on 12 July were approved earlier in the year and the summaries from each of the three volumes have been available on the IPCC website (http://www.ipcc.ch) since then. The 12 July launch was of the final printed version by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the IPCC. The Government have taken a close interest in the preparation and approval of these reports and have drawn on earlier drafts in preparing the United Kingdom's Climate Change Programme published last November. The Government strongly support the IPCC and regard these reports as providing an authoritative view on the scientific and technical aspects of climate change. The Government with the EU have pressed for consideration of the implications of the IPCC reports at the 7th Meeting of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held in Marrakesh in October/November.

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions she has had with members of the *(a)* US and *(b)* Japanese Administrations on the Kyoto targets; and if she will make a statement. [4009]

**Margaret Beckett** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I discussed the Kyoto Protocol with Paula Dobriansky, Under-Secretary for Global Affairs at the US State Department, and Yoriko Kawaguchi, the Japanese Environment Minister, during the recent climate change talks in Bonn. I also met Mrs. Kawaguchi in London on 16 July. I emphasised the importance of pressing ahead with the Kyoto Protocol, while keeping the door open to the US.

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations her Department has received from *(a)* the Department of Trade and Industry, *(b)* the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions and *(c)* the

Cabinet Office regarding (i) ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and (ii) the UK Climate Change Strategy; and if she will make a statement. [4067]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Government have declared their intention to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and will aim to do so at the same time as other member states of the European Community by 2002 at the latest.

Climate change is a major, cross-cutting policy issue. The UK climate change programme was developed in close consultation with all relevant Government Departments, many of which are responsible for developing and implementing policies in the programme.

### Public Service Agreements

**Mr. Breed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if her Department will adopt all the targets set by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in their public service agreement. [1715]

**Mr. Morley:** The Department has taken over responsibility for all of the public service agreement targets published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We have also assumed responsibility for the public service agreement targets relating to areas of work transferred from the former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

### Recycling

**Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she takes to ensure that the building of incinerators does not undermine the viability of local recycling schemes. [1810]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Government have made it clear in "Waste Strategy 2000" that incinerators must not crowd out recycling. Local authorities must also deliver the statutory targets set by the Government which will, on average, double the recycling and composting of household waste within three years and nearly treble it within five years.

We have also set guidelines on Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects to require proposals including incinerators to demonstrate that all opportunities for recycling have been considered first and that there is no barrier to the future development of recycling. We have also established a £40 million Waste and Resources Action Programme to overcome market barriers and hence improve the long-term viability of recycling of waste.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will list, in order of rank, recycling rates achieved by each OECD country. [3140]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* The table lists estimated municipal waste recycling (including composting) rates for OECD countries. The rates are based on figures published in the "OECD Environmental Data, Compendium 1999". The OECD publication does not include recycling rates and the figures given have been estimated from the information available. Comparisons between countries should be made with caution. There are doubts about comparability for a number of countries because of missing data, differences in the year, coverage and definitions (e.g. of recycling, municipal waste). Such differences, where they are known, are set out in the notes to the table.

*Municipal waste—OECD countries, latest year available*

| *Country* | *Year* | *Recycling (including composting) rate percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Austria[1] | 1996–97 | 45 |
| Belgium[2] | 1996 | 43 |
| Holland | 1996 | 41 |
| Switzerland* | 1996 | 40 |
| Finland*[3] | 1994 | 37 |
| Denmark[4] | 1997 | 29 |
| Canada*[5] | 1996 | 29 |
| Germany | 1993 | 29 |
| USA | 1996 | 27 |
| Korea | 1996 | 26 |
| Norway[6] | 1997 | 25 |
| Sweden | 1994 | 19 |
| Spain | 1996 | 16 |
| Slovak Republic | 1997 | 13 |
| UK[7] | 1999–2000 | 11 |
| France*[8] | 1995 | 10 |
| Iceland | 1997 | 10 |
| Greece | 1997 | 8 |
| Ireland | 1995 | 8 |
| Portugal | 1997 | 5 |
| Japan* | 1993 | 4 |
| Poland | 1997 | 2 |
| Russian Federation | 1992 | 1 |
| Hungary | 1996 | 0 |
| Mexico | 1997 | n/a |
| Turkey | 1995 | n/a |
| Czech Republic | 1994 | n/a |
| New Zealand | 1995 | n/a |
| Italy | 1997 | n/a |
| Luxembourg[9] | 1996 | n/a |

[1] Household waste only

[2] Flanders only—includes 330K of construction waste

[3] May include waste from demolition sites, sewerage and water treatment

[4] Household only

[5] Includes construction/demolition waste and sewage sludge

[6] Includes construction/demolition waste

[7] Based on England and Wales data from Municipal Waste Survey

[8] Household (excluding bulky waste) only

[9] Total waste generated excludes separate collection

*Notes:*

Recycling rate is based on composting and recycling tonnage divided by the total waste generated. For those countries marked * the total waste generated is less than the total of all disposals because residues of some treatments e.g. (composting) are landfilled. The relevant recycling rate may therefore include some material which is subsequently landfilled.

*Source:*

OECD Environmental Data: Compendium 1999, Table 7.2C

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what initiatives the Government plans to encourage local authorities to raise waste recycling targets; [6212]

(2) what financial assistance will be given to Essex County Council to help fund waste recycling initiatives. [6211]

**Mr. Meacher:** We have put in place statutory performance standards on recycling that all local authorities must achieve by 2003–04 and 2005–06. We have also said that we would look again at longer-term targets in the light of what local authorities are able to achieve and in the light of any technological developments.

The Spending Review 2000 announced the framework for the Government's support to local authorities for the next three years up to 2003–04. This included an annual increase in the revenue support to local authorities for Environmental Protection and Cultural Services (EPCS), which includes waste management efforts. By 2003–04 this support will have risen by £1.1 billion over the 2000–01 provision. Consistent with the general local authority financial framework, it is for Essex County Council to decide the proportion of their budget that should be directed to waste management work.

In addition to general support to local authority revenue expenditure, the spending review provided £140 million of Government grant for waste management work and £220 million for Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) resources, for waste projects. We will shortly consult on how the £140 million grant should be distributed. At this stage it is not possible to identify what funding Essex County Council might receive from this source.

Local Public Service Agreements also provide opportunities for authorities to commit themselves to exceeding the statutory recycling targets and to be rewarded with additional resources for doing so.

We have also established the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to promote sustainable waste management by working to create stable markets for recycled materials and products and remove barriers to waste minimisation, re-use and recycling. A stable and efficient market for recycled materials will help local authorities in their efforts to meet their statutory performance targets.

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what initiatives the Government have to make the public more aware of the importance of waste recycling. [6215]

**Mr. Meacher:** DEFRA's "Are You Doing Your Bit?" campaign promotes messages to encourage people to reduce waste (including through recycling), use energy efficiently, and conserve water. The campaign aims to inform people about the impact of their individual and collective actions and to motivate individuals to make small changes in their everyday actions to protect the environment.

The Department also supports the activities of the National Waste Awareness Initiative. This programme, targeted predominantly at the general public, aims to encourage more responsible attitudes towards waste and ways of dealing with it that are more sustainable eg to reduce it at source, re-use it, recycle it, or dispose of it safely if no other alternative exists.

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if she will make a statement on her target for recycling household waste; [7764]

(2) what plans she has to set higher targets for recycling. [7771]

**Mr. Meacher:** Under the Local Government Act 1999, the Government have set statutory performance standards for each English local authority for the composting and recycling of household waste. Overall, these standards require a doubling of recycling in 2003–04 and a tripling by 2005–06 compared to the 1998–99 baseline.

We will increase further the targets for household waste recycling and composting once these initial targets have been achieved.

## Livestock Diseases

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will investigate reports of outbreaks of blisters in the mouths of sheep and cattle unrelated to foot and mouth disease; if she will issue guidance to vets on this subject; and if she will assess to what extent such blisters may be mistaken for foot and mouth disease. [1979]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 4 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001. Copies are available in the Libraries of the House.

Blisters or vesicles are normally caused by the foot and mouth disease virus. It is the presence of ulcers and other mouth lesions that may cause difficulties in diagnosis. This is because lesions caused by the foot and mouth disease virus heal quickly in sheep and may not be present to aid a diagnosis whereas lesions due to other causes take longer to heal. To aid the diagnosis of foot and mouth disease, descriptions of some of the more common mouth lesions found in sheep, not caused by the foot and mouth disease virus, have been published in recent months in the veterinary literature.

Because of the need to cull animals believed to have foot and mouth disease within 24 hours to prevent the spread of disease, cases of foot and mouth disease must be confirmed on clinical grounds, without the benefit of laboratory results. A veterinary officer may order the slaughter of susceptible livestock on suspicion of disease in circumstances where the symptoms are suggestive of foot and mouth disease but not sufficiently consistent to confirm disease on clinical grounds.

## Livestock Movements

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the implications of D notice restrictions for the movement of farm animals in Worcestershire; when she expects all such restrictions to be removed; and if she will make a statement. [2005]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 4 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 13 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to restrict the long-distance movement of farm animals. [5417]

**Mr. Morley:** Long-distance movement of farm animals in Great Britain has been restricted since the foot and mouth outbreak began in February.

From 17 September livestock have been able to move for commercial reasons as well as for welfare reasons, subject to appropriate disease control restrictions and strict biosecurity controls. Journeys are not subject to a distance limit, but the journey must take no longer than nine hours. Full details of the conditions to be applied are available on the DEFRA website www.defra.gov.uk.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to review the livestock movement restrictions; what is the timetable of such a review; and if she will monitor the applicability of the full range of movement restrictions to the Isle of Wight. [6383]

**Mr. Morley:** The livestock movement restrictions arising from the foot and mouth disease outbreaks are kept under continuous review in the light of progress with eradicating the disease. Farm-to-farm movements are restarting in phases between 17 September and 1 October. We will then review the extent to which additional movements could be permitted over the winter and spring period.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the differences between livestock movement restrictions in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. [6374]

**Mr. Morley:** Responsibility for animal health matters is devolved to the Administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but there is close co-operation between the Rural Affairs Departments across the UK.

As the foot and mouth disease situation various across the constituent parts of the UK, different measures are needed to control it in different areas, although a common autumn movement regime currently operates in England and Wales.

## Contracts

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many contractors have had their contracts terminated because of *(a)* incompetence, *(b)* financial irregularities and *(c)* disagreements with her Department's officials. [2765]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 13 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

## Helicopters

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on what dates her Department hired or used helicopters in the last six months; and what the purpose was of each use. [2751]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 3 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

## Classical Swine Fever

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what precautions the Government have taken to ensure that the United Kingdom is not subject to a further outbreak of classical swine fever. [2544]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

## Imported Wheat

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what checks are made on the quality of imported wheat; and if she will make a statement. [2947]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

## Moles

**Mr. Wyatt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what assessment her Department has made of the methods used by other EU countries to control moles; [3071]

(2) if her Department will assess the advantages of introducing a ban on the use of strychnine in agriculture to kill moles. [3070]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

## Incineration

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will list the locations of incinerators in England and Wales *(a)* which are operational, *(b)* where permission has been given but they are not yet operational and *(c)* where a planning application has been submitted but has not yet been determined. [3142]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 10 July 2001]:* The Environment Agency reports that there are 11 municipal waste incinerators currently operational in England and Wales, marked in the table as "O". The table includes details of facilities which are under construction or approved but not yet constructed. Details of facilities where a planning application has been submitted but not yet determined are not held centrally. However, the table includes those planned sites that we are aware of.

There are many other incinerators, generally much smaller than municipal waste incinerators, for the incineration of sewage sludge, hazardous waste, clinical waste, production waste from factories etc. Generally, the larger plant are regulated by the Environment Agency and details of their locations are available on the Environment Agency's public register except where incinerators are part of another process regulated by the Agency, where they may not be shown separately on the register. Smaller

non-hazardous incineration plant are regulated by local authorities; the Department holds general information but detailed information is held separately by each local authority on a public register.

| *Plant name* | *District* | *Status* |
|---|---|---|
| Nottingham | Nottingham | O |
| Edmonton | London Borough of Enfield | O |
| SELCHP | London Borough of Lewisham | O |
| Belvedere | London Borough of Bexley | P |
| Edmonton B | London Borough of Enfield | P |
| Cleveland | Stockton on Tees | O |
| Bolton | Bolton | O |
| Chineham, North Baskingstoke | Baskingstoke and Deane | A |
| Allington | Maidstone | A |
| Capel, Surrey | Mole Valley | P |
| Guildford | Guildford | P |
| Colnbrook, Slough | Slough | A |
| Marchwood | New Forest | A |
| Redhill | Reigate and Banstead Borough Council | P |
| Ridham Dock | Swale District Council | P |
| South Portsmouth | Portsmouth | P |
| Coventry | Coventry | O |
| Dudley | Dudley | O |
| Stoke on Trent | Stoke on Trent | O |
| Tyseley | Birmingham | O |
| Wolverhampton | Wolverhampton | O |
| Worcester | Worcester District Council | P |
| Goole | East Riding of Yorkshire | P |
| Grimsby | North East Lincolnshire | P |
| Hull | City of Hull | P |
| Kirklees | Kirklees | U/C |
| Sheffield | Sheffield | O |
| Wrexham | Wrexham | P |
| Crymlyn Burrows | Neath Port Talbot | U/C |

O Operational
U/C Under construction
A Approved but not yet constructed
P Planned

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans her Department has to *(a)* conduct and *(b)* commission research into the environmental and health impact of waste incineration; and if she will make a statement. [3899]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* There is already a large body of research on incineration, but we are looking at what more needs to be done and the current Environmental Protection research programme contains a prospective project on possible "Health Effects of Incinerators".

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what level of dioxins is considered potentially lethal; what dioxins are produced in incineration of waste; and if she will make a statement on the methods of disposal of them. [4866]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* There is no evidence on which to base a level at which dioxins are potentially lethal to humans. Studies on humans who have been exposed to high levels of dioxins as a result of accidents or occupational exposure have reported a range of effects such as chloracne, an increased risk of cancer, changes in biochemical parameters such as enzyme levels and increases in mortality from cardiovascular disease, although there remains uncertainty about the direct causal link with dioxins. It is not known exactly what level of dioxins the people in these studies were exposed to but body burdens were at least one order of magnitude higher than in the general population. The Committee on Toxicity (COT) is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the toxicity of dioxins and will report their findings later this year.

A mixture of dioxins is produced in incineration of waste—they are formed on particles as the gases leaving the incinerator cool down. The gas treatment system reduces the particles and dioxins levels to the limits prescribed in the Waste Incineration Directive (total concentration of dioxins and furans 0.1ng toxic equivalents/m' averaged over 6–8 hours). Disposal of material contaminated with dioxins—such as fly ash—is normally to special landfill where they are contained, do not leach, and will pose no risk to health or the environment.

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her Department's policy is on large-scale waste incineration. [7886]

**Mr. Meacher:** Incineration of waste should only be considered where recycling is not feasible or is not the best practicable environmental option.

Our policy is that where waste incineration facilities are proposed, they should be small enough that they do not act as a disincentive to increases in recycling, and should include Combined Heat and Power—where heat is used to produce electricity and provide heating to homes or businesses—wherever possible.

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to compensate those living in the vicinity of proposed municipal incinerators; and if she will make a statement. [7756]

**Mr. Meacher:** Municipal incinerator plants will only be built once the full planning process has been completed. The local planning authority is responsible for the determination of any relevant planning permission, including the imposition of any appropriate conditions. We have no plans to compensate residents living in the vicinity of proposed municipal incinerators.

The Environment Agency will regulate the environmental performance of such plants. Its permits contain legally binding conditions concerning operational requirements. The Environment Agency will regularly inspect the incinerators and require the reporting of emissions and performance.

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what consideration she has given to a moratorium on new municipal incinerators; and if she will make a statement. [7755]

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to introduce a moratorium on new municipal incinerators; and if she will make a statement. [6214]

**Mr. Meacher:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Green) on 2 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 47W.

### Ministerial Travel

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she last travelled on the London Underground in the course of her official duties. [3683]

**Margaret Beckett:** I have not had cause to travel on the London Underground in the course of my official duties at DEFRA.

### Motorcyclists

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she is taking to curb the use of roads in areas of outstanding natural beauty as race tracks by organised gangs of motorcyclists. [3418]

**Mr. Meacher:** There are laws already in place to deal with dangerous driving, including by motorcyclists. There are no special arrangements for either Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Parks. In each case it is for the local police to enforce the law. That has been happening in recent problem areas such as the Peak District and the Yorkshire Dales, through the reduction and enforcement of speed limits and the deployment of helicopters and speed traps, which are having a positive effect.

### Disinfection

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent changes have been made to the disinfection regime. [3431]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 4 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

### Wind Farms (Fleetwood)

**Mrs. Humble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the effects of the proposed wind farm developments off the shore of Cleveleys, Lancashire on the fishing industry in Fleetwood; and if she will make a statement. [3810]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

### Cattle Grazing

**Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the effects of the controls on movement of cattle on the ecological management of wetlands used for cattle grazing; and what representations she has received from *(a)* English Nature, *(b)* the National Trust and *(c)* the RSPB on this matter. [3944]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 4 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

### BNFL

**Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information she has received on progress made in the BNFL stakeholder dialogue; and what assessment she has made of the benefit to departmental policy development of the outputs of the dialogue. [3953]

**Mr. Meacher:** My officials have reported to me on the progress of the dialogue, which is organised by the Environment Council, and its reports are publicly available on the Environment Council website. The dialogue is between an individual company and its stakeholders and is intended to contribute to its own policy development and not that of my Department. But the UK Government and the devolved Administrations will soon publish a consultation paper on the long-term management of radioactive waste, which will start a process of national debate and decision making. We are therefore learning from this dialogue, in terms of how to work with stakeholders—including the importance of openness and trust—and in relation to any conclusions that are reached on the safe management of radioactive materials and wastes. We have asked the Council about the possibility of quoting sections of the Waste Working Group's report in our consultation paper.

### Nuclear Waste

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she attended initial discussions regarding her Department's planned consultation paper on nuclear waste; and if she will make a statement. [4012]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The Secretary of State and I have had several discussions since June on nuclear issues including radioactive waste. The UK Government and the devolved Administrations will soon publish a consultation paper setting out detailed proposals. This will begin the process leading to the implementation of a radioactive waste management policy capable of inspiring broad support across the UK.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what targets her Department has set for reductions of *(a)* carbon dioxide and *(b)* greenhouse gas emissions for (i) 2010 and (ii) 2040; and if she will make a statement. [4011]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* The UK's target under the Kyoto Protocol is to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5 per cent. below 1990 levels over the period 2008–12. The UK Government have an additional domestic goal to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent. below 1990 levels by 2010. The Government have not yet set any targets for later years.

**Ms Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what part the UK Government intend to play to meet the royal commission report on Environmental Pollution recommendations of a global 60 per cent. reduction in carbon dioxide by 2050. [6228]

**Mr. Meacher:** The report from the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution recommends that the Government should now adopt a strategy that puts the UK on a path to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by some 60 per cent. from current levels by about 2050. The UK Climate Change Programme recognises that emissions reductions of 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. globally may

be needed to avoid dangerous climate change, and that developed countries may eventually have to make even greater emissions reductions. Emissions reductions of this magnitude can only be achieved by international action involving a series of commitments of which the Kyoto agreement is but the first step. The Government have provided a clear signal of the UK's intentions by setting a domestic goal of reducing $CO_2$ emissions by 20 per cent. below the 1990 by 2010. This goal goes well beyond the UK's obligation under the Kyoto Protocol and signals the UK's commitment to the long term process. The measures that could achieve the 20 per cent. $CO_2$ reduction are set out in the UK's Climate Change Programme published in November 2000. The Government are currently conducting a wider review of energy policy which encompasses technologies for emissions reduction in the longer term. The energy review is due to be completed at the end of 2001 and will contribute to the Government's response possibly early in 2002 to the specific recommendations in the report from the Royal Commission.

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list for the UK the changes in the levels of production of greenhouse gases in each year since 1990. [7759]

**Mr. Meacher:** The table lists the changes in the levels of emissions of UK greenhouse gases each year from 1990 to 1999, the most recent year available. The gases are weighted by global warming potential and emissions are in million tonnes carbon equivalent.

| | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* | *1993* | *1994* | *1995* | *1996* | *1997* | *1998* | *1999* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) | 164.4 | 165.5 | 161.4 | 157.2 | 156.1 | 153.7 | 159.0 | 152.2 | 152.8 | 149.4 |
| Methane ($CH_4$) | 21.0 | 20.7 | 20.2 | 19.4 | 17.6 | 17.5 | 17.1 | 16.6 | 15.8 | 15.1 |
| Nitrous oxide ($N_2O$) | 18.3 | 17.7 | 15.8 | 14.9 | 16.1 | 15.4 | 15.9 | 16.4 | 15.9 | 11.7 |
| Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) | 3.10 | 3.23 | 3.37 | 3.52 | 3.77 | 4.15 | 4.44 | 5.03 | 5.50 | 1.69 |
| Perflurocarbons (PFCs) | 0.62 | 0.49 | 0.26 | 0.22 | 0.27 | 0.30 | 0.25 | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.18 |
| Sulphur hexafluoride ($SF_6$) | 0.20 | 0.21 | 0.23 | 0.24 | 0.29 | 0.31 | 0.35 | 0.34 | 0.35 | 0.36 |
| Basket total | 208 | 208 | 201 | 195 | 194 | 191 | 197 | 191 | 191 | 178 |
| Percentage change from 1990 baseline[1] | — | −0.3 | −3.4 | −6.3 | −6.9 | −8.2 | −5.5 | −8.5 | −8.6 | −14.4 |

[1] The 1990 baseline is the sum of 1990 totals for $CO_2$, $CH_4$ and $N_2O$ and 1995 totals for HFCs, PFCs and $SF_6$ (208.4 million tonnes carbon equivalent).

## Sewer Flooding

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the incidence of sewage flooding in Lancashire in the last five years. [4328]

**Mr. Meacher:** Information on the incidence of sewage flooding in Lancashire is not collected centrally. The Director General of Water Services publishes information on the incidence of sewage flooding for United Utilities each year in "Levels of service for the water industry in England and Wales". The most recent report for 2000–01 was published at the end of July and is available from the House of Commons Library.

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what powers she has to require (1) North West Water to stop flooding in people's homes through faults in sewage systems; [6064]

(2) water companies to compensate people whose homes are damaged as a consequence of sewage flooding. [6065]

**Mr. Meacher:** Sewerage undertakers have a duty under section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991 to effectually drain their area, and this duty is enforceable by the Secretary of State or the Director General of Water Services. However, there can be practical or financial constraints. The duty in the 1991 Act is not, therefore, considered to be an absolute requirement on undertakers to prevent sewer flooding in all circumstances. Each undertaker is expected to set priorities for work which may be necessary. Ofwat and my officials are currently examining the causes of sewer flooding and possible remedies. Ofwat will publish a paper on the issue early in 2002.

Householders are entitled to compensation equivalent to a year's sewerage charges up to a maximum of £1,000 under the Water Supply and Sewerage Services (Customer Service Standards) Regulations every time there is internal sewage flooding.

**Mr. Pollard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the powers of Ofwat to compel water companies to carry out their statutory duties with regard to preventing the incursion of sewage into customers' homes; and if she will make a statement. [7096]

**Mr. Meacher:** Sewerage undertakers have a duty under section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991 to drain effectually their area and this duty is enforceable by the Secretary of State or the Director General of Water Services. However, there can be practical or financial constraints. The duty in the 1991 Act is not, therefore, considered to be an absolute requirement on undertakers to prevent sewer flooding in all circumstances. Ofwat and the Department are currently examining the causes of sewer flooding and possible remedies. Ofwat will publish a paper on the issue early in 2002.

## Animal Welfare

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many prosecutions have been recorded in respect of offences concerning cruelty to animals in each of the last five years. [4170]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many animals were killed under licences issued by her Department, broken down by species, in each of the last three years. [5901]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* No such licences have been issued in the last three years to kill any wild animals (as defined in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981).

## Genetically Modified Organisms

**Mr. Breed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many batches of seed have been *(a)* recalled and *(b)* stopped from growing this year because of the presence of unauthorised GMOs. [3753]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* During 2001, no seed sold to farmers has been recalled or stopped from growing due to the presence of unauthorised GMOs. There have been seven occasions when small-scale variety trails have been halted in England. In three cases the trials were not sown and in four cases the trial plots were destroyed because of suspected GMO presence. In five out of the seven cases the suspected GMO presence proved to be negative.

**Joan Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what research is being carried out on soil ecology at the farm scale evaluations of GM crops. [4470]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Farm Scale Evaluations are an ecological experiment specifically designed to study the effects of the weed control regimes associated with four genetically modified herbicide tolerant (GMHT) crops on farmland food-webs and in particular the food resources available for farmland birds. The experiment is based on the ecology (that is, interaction of living organisms with each other and their environment) of the soil weed-seed bank and a number of selected invertebrate indicator species that feed on farmland weeds or animals living on the weeds. The study includes a direct investigation of the effects of the herbicide management systems associated with the GMHT crops on soil-dwelling invertebrates such as spiders, beetles and Collembola, and indirect investigation of the effects on the activity of some species of earthworms.

**Joan Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the Government's policy is on a threshold for the presence of authorised GM varieties. [4467]

**Mr. Morley:** The EU Commission has issued a revised working document on adventitious presence of GM seed in seed of conventional varieties, taking into account the opinion of the Scientific Committee on Plants. This proposes the introduction of the following thresholds for the adventitious presence of authorised GMs:

*(a)* 0.3 per cent. for seed of a cross-pollinating species other than maize (for which the probability of volunteers is very low) and beet and certain vegetable plants (cross-pollinated crops propagated from seed but cultivated vegetatively);

*(b)* 0.5 per cent. for seed of maize, beet and certain vegetable plants (see *(a)*), for seed of a self-pollinating species other than soya and field pea (see *(c)*), for seed of vegetatively propagated species (in practice only potato);

*(c)* 0.7 per cent. for soya and field pea (for which the probability of volunteers is very low).

Genetically modified seeds having not received an authorisation under Part C of Directive 90/220/EEC now replaced by Directive 2001/18/EC should not be present in a seed lot. Directive 2001/18/EC does not foresee the establishment of thresholds for presence of unauthorised genetically modified organisms.

However, it is the intention to amend Directive 2001/18/EEC to provide for the possibility of establishing thresholds for technically unavoidable or adventitious presence of minute amounts of genetically modified organisms as or in products not authorised in accordance with Community legislation provided that certain conditions are fulfilled. The annexes of the seed Directive will have to be changed accordingly once the amendment of Directive 2001/18/EC enters into force.

The Government are consulting the main stakeholder organisations on the EU Commission's revised working document. When these consultations are concluded, the Government will form a view on its policy on thresholds.

Meanwhile, I am placing a copy of the Commission's working document (dated 25 May 2001) in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if she will list the parish and community consultations to be held ahead of the autumn-sown farm scale trials of GM crops; [5659]

(2) if she will list the consultation meetings, together with their dates, held in relation to the winter oilseed rape farm trials of GM crops; [5658]

(3) in what ways the Government intends to respond to concerns raised by parishioners and local farmers near to the proposed autumn-sown farm trials of GM crops. [5660]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Department wrote on 23 July to all relevant parish, district and county councils in England with copies of the consents for the GM crops involved, information about the Farm Scale Evaluations and details of the proposed locations of the 26 trials. I wrote to all English constituency MPs with the locations and background information on the evaluations. We have offered that DEFRA officials will be available, whenever possible, to attend public meetings to discuss the evaluations if called by a parish council.

We have received three recent invitations for officials to attend public meetings in Hemswell Cliff in Lincolnshire, Driffield in East Yorkshire and Long Marston in Warwickshire. The first of these meetings was held on 6 September. The other two meetings are to be held in October.

We have received seven representations from local parish members specifically about the autumn sites but none from local farmers. We have responded to the specific concerns raised, which were mostly about the use of the herbicide Glufosinate Ammonium by providing further information to the correspondents.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the contracts her Department has with the National Institute of Agricultural Botany in respect of GM *(a)* crops and *(b)* foods. [5661]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Department has contracts with NIAB for the provision of technical services undertaking statutory testing for Plant Breeders Rights, National Listing and Seed Certification and for a desk study to review methods for sampling seed lots to determine the presence of GM material.

NIAB is one of the partners in a research consortium undertaking the Bright project (Botanical and Rotational Implications of GM Herbicide Tolerance). DEFRA provides half the funding for this project.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the public inquiry will be reconvened into the proposed inclusion of Chardon LL genetically modified fodder maize on to the National Seed List. [5662]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Hearing into the proposed addition of Chardon LL to the United Kingdom National List was adjourned in November 2000 when we learned that French testing system used to produce the Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability report did not appear to be fully compliant with the requirements of Directive 72/180/EEC.

Despite a number of letters, we have yet to receive a substantive response from the Commission to our inquiries on the status of the French testing system. However, I understand that the French Authorities have re-sown Chardon LL in official tests this year and that a new test report will be submitted to my officials this autumn.

In addition, the Commission has indicated that it proposes to update the provisions of the 1972 Directive to reflect best current scientific practice.

If we receive appropriate assurances from the Commission before the end of the year, we would hope to reconvene the Hearing early in 2002.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what contacts her Department has had with the European Commission since October 2000, in respect of proposed listing of the GM fodder maize, Chardon LL; and if she will place copies of the correspondence in the Library. [5663]

**Mr. Meacher:** Officials wrote to the European Commission on 22 November 2000 when it became clear that there were doubts about the French testing system for maize. My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Hayman wrote to Commissioner Byrne on 20 December 2000 and received a holding response on 23 February. No substantive response has been received to date. Copies of the correspondence have been placed in the Library of the House.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress has been made in establishing a compensation scheme for those affected adversely by the growing of GM crops. [5551]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* Liability for any loss that might arise as a result of the use of GM crops is an important issue, which is being addressed at both European and UK levels. The European Commission issued a working paper in late July with proposals for an environmental liability regime to cover a range of activities, including for GMOs. We are considering these proposals, which cover damage to biodiversity and damage that creates serious harm to human health. Given the support expressed at last December's Environment Council by member states to the principle of a directive in this area and to the idea of including GMOs, it is likely that GMOs, and therefore the cultivation of GM crops, will be covered by any new directive.

I am also considering the issue of any domestic liability provisions for GM crops that might be needed in the light of the Commission's wider proposals. I am not in a position to provide any further detail at present.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many acres of land are set aside for farm scale evaluations of GM crops in *(a)* Pembrokeshire, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* the United Kingdom. [5552]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* The information is as follows:

*(a)* There have been no Farm Scale Evaluations of GM crops in Pembrokeshire during the course of the research programme so far.

*(b)* There was one Farm Scale Evaluation site in Wales in 2000 and another in 2001. Both of these were at Sealand, Flintshire and the GM crops covered an area of 8.5 acres (3.5 ha) in total.

*(c)* The number of Farm Scale Evaluation sites in the United Kingdom and the area of GM crops involved (including *(b)*), are as shown for 2000 and 2001 together with those expected for 2002.

| | *Number of sites* | *Area (acres)* | *Area (hectares)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2000 and 2001 | 175 | 2,433 | 985 |
| Estimated for 2002 | 103 | 1,354 | 548 |
| Estimated total | 278 | 3,787 | 1,533 |

**Mrs. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what powers she has to intervene when disposal guidelines are not adhered to in relation to land used in farm scale evaluations of GM crops. [5549]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* The powers to intervene on disposal arrangements for the GM crops in the farm-scale evaluations depend on the approval status of the GM crop concerned.

The GM rape and beet in the evaluations are being grown in England under research (Part B) consents issued by this Department. The consents specify the disposal arrangements. The GM Inspectorate act on behalf of the Secretary of State to monitor compliance with these conditions. They have powers to require applicants to comply and to take remedial action to safeguard human health and the environment if necessary. There are also powers to prosecute where it seems an offence has occurred.

The GM maize in the evaluations has a Europe-wide approval for cultivation under Directive 90/220; this does not impose any conditions on the growing or disposal of the crop. Under the farm-scale evaluations agreement, SCIMAC, the industry body, has responsibility for the disposal of the GM crops in the evaluations and to ensure

they are not used as fodder for animals. At harvest the maize plants are removed from the site and then either taken to landfill or chopped up and incorporated into the soil away from the trial site.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if the Government have implemented the recommendation from the Working Group on the Application of Genetics in Fisheries and Mariculture at its meeting in Cork in 1998 concerning risk assessment protocols that distinguish between the impacts of polyploid and transgenic organisms; and if he will place a copy of that document in the Library; [6638]

(2) if she will list the names and positions of British members of the Working Group on the Application of Genetics in Fisheries and Mariculture of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas. [6637]

**Mr. Meacher:** The recommendation referred to is met through implementation of European Union Directive 90/220. This stipulates that genetically modified organisms, including transgenic fish, cannot be released unless a detailed risk assessment confirms there will be no unacceptable effects on human health or the environment.

The report of the relevant Working Group has been made available in the Libraries of the House. The current UK members of this group are:

Dr. D. Stone, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)

Dr. A. Moore, CEFAS

Dr. E. Verspoor, Scottish Executive, Environment and Rural Affairs Department, Fisheries Research Service

Professor G. Carvalho, University of Hull

Professor A. Ferguson, Queens University, Belfast.

A genetically modified or transgenic fish may also be a polyploid organism, but not necessarily so. Further background on the risk assessment of GM fish is given in the booklet entitled "Guidance for Experimental Releases of Genetically Modified Fish" (DETR/ACRE Guidance Note 8, February 1997). This is also available in the Libraries of the House.

**Joan Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will publish the timetable for implementing EU Directive 2001/18 into UK law. [4473]

**Mr. Meacher:** Member states are required to transpose Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms into the environment into national law by 17 October 2002. The Department has launched a consultation with stakeholders on the issues and principles raised by the new Directive. We will then hold a further round of consultations on implementing legislation in the first half of 2002 with a view to ensuring transposition by the required date.

The Scottish Executive, the National Assembly for Wales and the Department of Environment for Northern Ireland will be conducting separate consultations for their areas on the implementation issues for which they have devolved powers.

## Waste Disposal

**Sue Doughty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will pilot schemes for pyrolysis, gasification and anaerobic digestion as techniques of waste disposal; and if she will make a statement. [4148]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* A number of facilities are already being developed to demonstrate the full capabilities of these processes with respect to a range of wastes. I am keen that these possibilities should be pursued. That is why energy produced from the biodegradable fraction of waste by these new technologies is supported in the Renewables Obligation.

**Sue Doughty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will introduce statutory separation at source of household waste in England and Wales; and if she will make a statement. [4153]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Government have set challenging statutory recycling targets for local authorities. It is likely that in order to meet these targets many more local authorities will decide to introduce kerbside separation of household waste. In light of that, we will decide later whether or not to make separation at source mandatory.

**Sue Doughty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will accept the recommendation of the Fifth report of the Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs on the Government's waste strategy 2000; and if she will make a statement. [4150]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) leads on renewable energy issues. In its Preliminary Consultation on the Renewables Obligation, it proposed that although it will make only a small contribution, energy from the biodegradable fraction of waste, including waste incineration, should count towards the renewable energy target. However, this would not receive support under the Renewables Obligation. In view of the Select Committee's comments, DEFRA is currently reconsidering this and other issues with DTI. DTI will shortly publish the Statutory Consultation document detailing the revised proposals.

**Sue Doughty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the advantages and disadvantages of restricting incineration to those facilities of less than 100,000 tonnes/year capacity; and if she will make a statement. [4151]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* We have made it clear in "Waste Strategy 2000" that incinerators, where they are built, should be appropriately sized so that they do not crowd out recycling. There has been no assessment of the advantages or disadvantages of restricting the size of incinerators.

**Tom Brake:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what measures the Government plans to introduce to facilitate the tracking of dioxins in ash mixtures. [5850]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* In August 2001 the Environment Agency imposed conditions on municipal waste incinerators that required the operators to sample and analyse the ash streams arising from their processes for dioxins. These data will be placed on the relevant public registers. In addition, the Agency is presently trialling a process to track the initial destination of ash generated by municipal waste incinerators. Should the trial be successful, the Agency plans to implement the system throughout England and Wales.

**Tom Brake:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what criteria the Environment Agency applies in deciding to apply the legally binding sanctions available to them to locate the final destinations of construction materials containing dioxins from toxic fly ash. [5853]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* Fly ash containing air pollution control residues is generally classified by the Environment Agency as a "special waste". This means that its consignment from an incinerator, and any subsequent transfers as a waste, are subject to the requirements of the Special Waste Regulations 1996 and the duty of care imposed by section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Under the Special Waste Regulations, each consignment of special waste must be pre-notified to the Environment Agency and must be accompanied by a consignment note which describes its hazardous properties.

The Environment Agency does not have a legal duty to enforce the duty of care under section 34 of the 1990 Act but has a right of access to the records held by those subject to it. The guidance in DOE Circular 19/91 (paragraph 35) envisages that the Agency will pursue breaches of section 34 and seek access to these records where it suspects (a) that waste has not been transferred to an "authorised person" or (b) an actual or potential breach of section 33 of the 1990 Act.

However, there are circumstances in which waste may cease to be a waste (eg it is used in the manufacture of building products) and at this point the Environment Agency's responsibilities for the enforcement of waste management controls also cease.

**Judy Mallaber:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what procedures are in place to ensure that the Environment Agency can distinguish between leachates from the Hilts Quarry site, Crich and the Roe's Lane landfill site in conducting investigations into applications by Rolls-Royce; [5805]

(2) on what evidence the Environment Agency determined the high reading of Cobalt 60 in samples of surface water in Crich, Derbyshire, in the third quarter of 1999 was a false reading; [5809]

(3) what action will be taken to ensure the safety of the existing site in the event of a decision by the Environment Agency to end the disposal of Rolls-Royce waste at Hilts Quarry, Crich; [5803]

(4) what studies are being *(a)* undertaken and *(b)* commissioned by the Environment Agency in making a determination on the applications submitted by Rolls-Royce Marine Power Operations Ltd. in so far as they relate to disposal of waste at Hilts Quarry, Crich; [5806]

(5) what information is available to the Environment Agency on the nature of the materials *(a)* stored at Hilts Quarry, Crich, after disposal since the 1960s from Rolls-Royce Marine Power Operations Ltd., Derby and *(b)* deposited at Hilts Quarry in weekly disposals from RRMPOL; [5804]

(6) what procedures have been put in place to ensure that sample results from Crich, Derbyshire, given to Rolls-Royce are made available to the Environment Agency and that abnormal results are investigated; [5807]

(7) what criteria the Environment Agency is applying in determining whether the disposal of Rolls-Royce waste at Hilts Quarry, Crich, Derbyshire, should continue. [5808]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 14 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her estimate is, for each of the past five years, for each London borough, of the proportion of *(a)* household and *(b)* industrial waste that is (i) recycled, (ii) disposed of by incineration and (iii) disposed of by landfill. [6753]

**Mr. Meacher:** The tables set out the available information for the percentage of municipal waste recycled, incinerated and landfilled for each of the four years, 1996–97, 1997–98, 1998–99 and 1999–2000 taken from the Department's Municipal Waste Management survey. The data are available for municipal waste but not for household waste separately. Household waste accounts for around 80 per cent. of municipal waste for London as a whole with the remainder coming from commercial and other sources. The available breakdown is by waste disposal areas. Data for 1995–96 are not available at local authority level.

The only readily available information on the management of other industrial and commercial waste in London is for 1998–99 and is given as follows. This was collected by the Environment Agency's National Waste Production survey; further details are published in "Strategic Waste Management Assessment 2000: London".

*London Municipal Waste, Unitary and Waste Disposal Authorities by disposal method 1996–97 to 1999–2000*

*Percentage*

| *Name* | *Type*[1,6] | *1996–97* | *1997–98* | *1998–99* | *1999–2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Recycled* | | | | | |
| London Borough of Bexley | UA | 12 | 19 | 23 | 19 |

*London Municipal Waste, Unitary and Waste Disposal Authorities by disposal method 1996–97 to 1999–2000*

*Percentage*

| *Name* | *Type*[1,4] | *1996–97* | *1997–98* | *1998–99* | *1999–2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corporation of London | UA | [2]— | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| London Borough of Tower Hamlets | UA | [3]— | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Westminster City Council | UA | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| London Borough of Greenwich | UA | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| London Borough of Lewisham | UA | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| London Borough of Southwark | UA | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| London Borough of Bromley | UA | 7 | 9 | 7 | 11 |
| London Borough of Croydon | UA | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| London Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames | UA | 8 | 10 | 12 | 16 |
| London Borough of Merton | UA | 7 | 5 | 11 | 12 |
| London Borough of Sutton | UA | 13 | 13 | 15 | 20 |
| East London Waste Authority | WDA | [5]3 | [5]3 | 3 | [5]2 |
| North London Waste Authority | WDA | [5]4 | [5]6 | 6 | 7 |
| West London Waste Authority | WDA | [3]— | 7 | 8 | [5]7 |
| Western Riverside Waste Authority | WDA | 5 | 5 | 6 | 9 |
| Total | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| *Disposed of by incineration* | | | | | |
| London Borough of Bexley | UA | 27 | 51 | 46 | 47 |
| Corporation of London | UA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| London Borough of Tower Hamlets | UA | [3]— | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Westminster City Council | UA | 58 | 60 | 50 | 54 |
| London Borough of Greenwich | UA | 84 | 78 | 75 | 54 |
| London Borough of Lewisham | UA | 95 | 95 | 93 | 91 |
| London Borough of Southwark | UA | 5 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| London Borough of Bromley | UA | [2]— | [2]— | [2]— | [2]— |
| London Borough of Croydon | UA | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| London Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames | UA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| London Borough of Merton | UA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| London Borough of Sutton | UA | 11 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| East London Waste Authority | WDA | [5]13 | [5]12 | 9 | [5]9 |
| North London Waste Authority | WDA | [5]51 | [5]41 | 41 | 49 |
| West London Waste Authority | WDA | [3]— | [3]— | [2]— | [2]— |
| Western Riverside Waste Authority | WDA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 22 | 20 | 19 | 18 |
| *Disposed of by landfill* | | | | | |
| London Borough of Bexley | UA | 62 | 30 | 31 | 34 |
| Corporation of London | UA | 100 | 100 | 100 | 99 |
| London Borough of Tower Hamlets | UA | [3]— | 98 | 97 | 97 |
| Westminster City Council | UA | 38 | 39 | 44 | 42 |
| London Borough of Greenwich | UA | 14 | 19 | 20 | 39 |
| London Borough of Lewisham | UA | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| London Borough of Southwark | UA | 93 | 97 | 96 | 93 |
| London Borough of Bromley | UA | 92 | 91 | 92 | 89 |
| London Borough of Croydon | UA | 89 | 90 | 90 | 89 |
| London Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames | UA | 92 | 90 | 88 | 84 |
| London Borough of Merton | UA | 93 | 95 | 89 | 88 |
| London Borough of Sutton | UA | 76 | 76 | 85 | 80 |
| East London Waste Authority | WDA | [5]84 | [5]84 | 88 | [5]89 |
| North London Waste Authority | WDA | [5]45 | [5]53 | 53 | 45 |
| West London Waste Authority | WDA | [3]— | 93 | 92 | 93 |
| Western Riverside Waste Authority | WDA | 95 | 95 | 94 | [5]91 |
| Total | | 73 | 74 | 74 | 74 |

[1] Unitary Authority

[2] Negligible amount

[3] Not available

[4] Waste Disposal Authority

[5] Includes an estimation for missing data

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*London Industrial and Commercial Waste by disposal method—1998–99*

*Percentage*

| | *Disposal method* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Recycled* | *Incineration* | *Landfill* | *Other disposal/ recovery* |
| Industrial | 40 | 4 | 41 | 15 |
| Commercial | 32 | 1 | 57 | 10 |
| Total | 35 | 2 | 51 | 12 |

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on how many occasions in each of the last five years *(a)* the Environment Agency and *(b)* local authorities have exercised their powers under section 59 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to remove illegal waste tyre dumps. [4477]

**Mr. Meacher:** Environment Agency data are available only for 1999 and 2000 and do not separately identify fly-tipping incidents involving waste tyres. The total number of notices which the Agency served under section 59(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in each of these years is estimated to be 158 (1999) and 117 (2000). Information on the use by local authorities of their powers under section 59 of the 1990 Act is not held centrally.

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps the Government intend to take to reduce fly-tipping of tyres. [4476]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Government have put in place strict controls to ensure that all waste, including waste tyres, is disposed of safely and the penalties for contravention of these controls are severe. The action being taken by the Government on fly-tipping, and other forms of illegal waste disposal, was set out most recently in the Government's response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee's Report on the Environment Agency (Cm 4832—paragraphs 55–60). The Environment Agency is also developing a long-term programme to encourage the proper disposal of waste tyres.

## Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many *(a)* PFI and *(b)* PPP contracts have been agreed by her Department over the last five years; how many have been satisfactorily completed; and in how many has compensation been (i) paid and (ii) claimed for performance failure. [4602]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Laws:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many PFI transactions have been overseen by her Department in each of the last 10 years; what her estimate is of the cost savings made in each of these transactions in comparison with the public sector alternative; what are the outstanding payments to be made in relation to these transactions for each of the next 15 years; and if she will make a statement. [5734]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* The Department has signed contracts for four PFI projects in the last 10 years. Each contract is still on-going.

The estimated total cost savings are:

| *Contract* | *Saving £000s* |
|---|---|
| Broadland Flood Alleviation Scheme | 5,400–20,000 |
| Pevensey Bay Sea Defences | 1,900 |
| Brooklands Avenue Cambridge | 2,700 |
| Countryside Agency's SPIRIT (IT Services) | 1,300 |

In addition to the above projects, the Department oversaw in the last 10 years eight waste management PFI projects where Local Authorities were the main contractors. Information on these projects is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Details of individual payouts to contractors under PFI contracts are usually regarded as commercially confidential. Aggregate figures of estimated payments under all PFI contracts for the years 2001–02 to 2025–26 were published in Table C18 of the Budget 2001 "Red Book".

**Mr. Laws:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the economic penalties imposed on private sector firms in each of the last five years for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the private finance initiative; and if she will make a statement. [5735]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* In each of the last five years the Department has not imposed any economic penalties on private sector firms for failures to deliver in relation to key performance indicators in projects involving the private finance initiative, as there have been no such failures.

## Fruit Labelling

**Hugh Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to introduce a more transparent system of labelling for top fruit. [4546]

**Mr. Morley:** EU marketing standards for fresh fruit and vegetables already lay down labelling requirements for top fruit throughout the marketing chain in respect of country of origin, class and variety. Amendments to these standards are considered from time to time as necessary.

## Horticulture

**Hugh Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to exempt horticulturists from pesticide taxes. [4542]

**Mr. Morley:** There are no present plans to introduce a pesticides tax. In the 2001 Budget, the Government welcomed the latest set of voluntary proposals for reducing the environmental impact of pesticides use and invited the industry to implement the voluntary package nationwide. Progress will be reviewed in the run up to

Budget 2002 to assess whether a voluntary approach is delivering significant environmental benefits, over and above those that would result from a pesticides tax.

### Cleanaway Site, South Ockendon

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the accepted background level of dioxins in the environment is; what the deemed safe level is; what levels the Environment Agency has found at the Cleanaway site in South Ockendon; and if she will make a statement. [4852]

**Mr. Meacher:** The levels of dioxins in the urban environment are, roughly:

Air: 100 femtograms per cubic metre

Soil: 30 nanograms per kilogram

Water: dioxins do not dissolve well in water so very low

River sediments: 20 nanograms per kilogram.

Most human exposure to dioxins is through food and currently average adult dietary intake is estimated to be 0.9 picograms per kilogram of body weight per day. This is within the WHO-recommended tolerable daily intake range (of 1 to 4 picograms per kilogram of body weight) and below the EC Scientific Committee on Food recommended tolerable weekly intake level (14 picograms per kilogram of body weight).

The Environment Agency has not carried out any analysis of dioxins at the Cleanaway site in South Ockendon.

*Notes:*

Nanogram—one thousand millionth of a gram ($1 \times 10^{-9}$g)

Picogram—one million millionth of a gram ($1 \times 10^{-12}$g)

Femtogram—one thousand million millionth of a gram ($1 \times 10^{-15}$g)

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what information the Environment Agency has collated as to how much fly ash deposited in the past 20 years in the Cleanaway site at South Ockendon, and the extent to which this dumping regime involved the ash being *(a)* damped down on site and *(b)* drenched prior to its arrival; [4863]

(2) how much fly ash in the past 20 years was *(a)* used for creating on-site roads of tracks at the Cleanaway site in South Ockendon and *(b)* used as cover for each day's dumping at this site. [4864]

**Mr. Meacher:** Waste disposal sites operate under the terms of waste management licences and are subject to the controls set out in Part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994. The licence for each site sets out the types and quantities of waste which can be accepted for disposal at that site. The licence for the South Ockendon site is available for inspection on the public register which the Environment Agency is required to keep under section 64 of the 1990 Act.

The Agency has not separately collated information on the amount of fly ash deposited or used for on-site roads or cover at the South Ockendon site. I understand that consignments of mixed fly ash and bottom ash were consigned from the Edmonton municipal waste incinerator to the South Ockendon site under the terms of the site's licence; and were classified and recorded by the licence holder as industrial waste. The Agency states that the deposit of this mixed ash at the site ceased in December 1997.

The Environment Agency also states that the mixed ash from the Edmonton incinerator was drenched in water as it was produced. It is a condition of the licence for the South Ockendon site that

> "Site roads shall, in dry weather, be sprayed with water to suppress dust."

The Environment Agency is carrying out a thorough investigation into the destinations of ash from municipal waste incinerators, the environmental implications of its use and what steps may be needed in the light of these findings. A report will be published by the Agency on completion of its investigation.

### Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

**Mr. Chope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the performance of the Eaga partnership in delivering under the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme; and if she will make a statement. [4767]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* The Department maintains a close watch on the performance of both scheme managers—Eaga Partnership Limited and Eastern HEES Limited. This includes both regular management reports, and the use of an external contractor—White Young and Green—to audit the systems operated by the two scheme managers to ensure their effectiveness.

The introduction of the radically improved Home Energy Efficiency Scheme in June 2000 represented a difficult challenge for both scheme managers. The national shortage of gas heating engineers has led to severe delays in some areas in the installation and repair of central heating systems. This problem is being tackled through the recruitment of additional installers and the training of 800 new engineers to work under the scheme. These measures have led to major improvements in the speed of work with over 2,800 boiler installations completed in June 2001, compared to 590 in January.

The Department continues to maintain a close watch on the performance of both scheme managers to ensure that they provide a quality service to households applying to the scheme.

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if energy efficiency targets set by the Government as part of the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme are being met; and if she will make a statement. [7846]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) provides households with packages of heating and insulation measures, tailored to the condition of the property and the householders' circumstances.

The individual packages of measures were developed in conjunction with the Building Research Establishment and are designed to ensure that householders are no longer at risk from fuel poverty.

Energy efficiency in homes is commonly measured using the standard assessment procedure (SAP). This is a fuel cost based rating system that is expressed on a scale of one (poor) to 100 (excellent).

While there are no specific energy efficiency targets set within HEES, on average, homes are left with an average energy efficiency rating of SAP 59. The average improvement from the work is SAP 19.

### Live Cattle Exports

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the cost has been to UK public funds of subsidising the export of live cattle from the EU to the middle east and North Africa in the last five years. [5281]

**Mr. Morley:** During the 1999–2000 EU budget year, the EU spent approximately 110 million euros on export refunds for live cattle to all destinations. We do not have data for specific destinations. The UK Exchequer does not contribute directly to the cost of any agricultural expenditure from the EU budget, but contributes to the budget as a whole. The UK position is to argue for a reformed CAP and an end to such export subsidies.

### Departmental Events

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what *(a)* national and *(b)* international awareness events her Department has participated in since June 1997 in the form of (i) sponsorship, (ii) departmental attendance, (iii) similar departmental activities and (iv) a message of support. [5044]

**Mr. Morley:** The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was not formed until 8 June 2001. Consequently, historical information for the years mentioned in the question is not available.

### DEFRA Website

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the cost was of converting the MAFF website into the new DEFRA website. [5254]

**Mr. Morley:** The redesign of the MAFF website into the new DEFRA website was undertaken using internal resources. It is not possible to be precise about the extent of those indirect costs but they are estimated to be less than £10,000.

### Farming

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farmers in *(a)* England and *(b)* Cumbria do no other farming activity except letting out their grass. [5258]

**Mr. Morley:** The information is not available.

The annual June census asks farmers only to account for land that they actively farm themselves.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proposals she has to assist farmers whose only business is letting out their grass. [5257]

**Mr. Morley:** My officials are in touch with the Arthur Rank Foundation and with industry bodies about the work of the ARF's National Fodder Bureau and Government match funding for this charitable work. These discussions have included consideration of the prices and availability of fodder and grazing across the country.

**Hugh Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to represent non-farming and conservation interests on her Department's Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food. [6002]

**Mr. Morley:** Appointments to the independent Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, announced on 9 August, have been made by the Prime Minister. Members have been appointed in a personal capacity, not as representatives of particular groups, and reflect a wide range of interests, knowledge and expertise extending beyond farming and conservation.

Full details of membership are on the Commission's website www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/farming.

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps the Government are taking to reduce the level of bureaucracy for farmers. [6246]

**Mr. Morley:** We are very conscious of the need to reduce bureaucracy. While some regulation is unavoidable if the Government are to safeguard public and animal health, environmental matters or public funds, the aim is to keep regulation to a minimum. A major programme of work to streamline processes has been under way for the last 18 months since my right hon. Friend the former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food asked the industry to identify particular problem areas. In Europe, too, we continue to seek greater simplification of regulations affecting farmers.

Money has been saved in direct costs to industry as well as time saved in paperwork—for example, by implementing a simplified procedure for granting "own-use" approvals for imports of pesticides with a reduced fee, by streamlining intervention procedures and by better co-ordinated cattle inspections. We continue to implement the remaining recommendations from the Red Tape Reviews and the Better Regulation Task Force report on Environmental Regulation and Farmers.

In addition, in common with other regulatory departments, we are preparing a Departmental Regulatory Reform Action Plan.

### Absence

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many days on average were lost per employee in his Department because of sickness; and how many officials retired early from his Department, in each of the past 10 years. [R] [5051]

**Mr. Morley:** This reply essentially reflects the position in the former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Details are not readily available for the ex-DETR and Home Office groups who now form part of DEFRA.

The Department does not maintain aggregated data on sickness absence but relies instead on a comprehensive analysis of sickness absence in the Civil Service which is produced annually by Cabinet Office. Copies of such reports are placed in House Libraries.

In 1998 the Cabinet Office published a report 'Working Well Together—Managing Attendance in the Public Sector' aimed at promoting wider awareness and use of the very best attendance management techniques in order to reduce sickness absence levels across the public sector. Following that report, the Department has designed a range of new sickness absence management procedures which it is currently in the process of rolling out across the Department.

Responsibility for attendance matters within the Central Science Laboratory, the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, the Centre for Environmental Fisheries and Aquaculture Agency—all former MAFF agencies—has been delegated to the agency chief executives and I have asked them to reply direct. The Pesticides Safety Directorate and Veterinary Medicines Directorate Agencies are covered by the departmental response.

1,045 officials retired early from the former MAFF and its agencies in the 10 calendar years to 31 December 2000:

1991: 33
1992: 230
1993: 50
1994: 82
1995: 231
1996: 165
1997: 94
1998: 21
1999: 72
2000: 67.

*Letter from Michael Roberts to David Maclean, dated 24 September 2001:*

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has asked me to reply, in respect of the Central Science Laboratory, to your question concerning sickness absence.

Comprehensive analysis of sickness absence data for the Civil Service is provided in the annual Cabinet Office reports, copies of which are to be found in House Libraries. However for illustratory purposes sickness absence within Central Science Laboratory for the last four years is as follows:

1998 = 6.65 days per employee
1999 = 7.96 days per employee
2000 = 6.39 days per employee
2001 to date = 5.68 days per employee.

*Letter from Steve Edwards to David Maclean, dated September 2001:*

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question on how many days on average were lost to the VLA because of sickness and how many officials retired early in each of the past 10 years.

The Agency does not maintain aggregated data on sickness absence but relies instead on a comprehensive analysis of sickness absence in the Civil Service which is produced annually by the Cabinet Office. Copies of such reports are placed in House Libraries.

In 1998 the Cabinet Office published a report "Working Well Together—Managing Attendance in the Public Sector" aimed at promoting wider awareness and use of the very best attendance management techniques in order to reduce sickness absence levels across the public sector. Following that report the Agency reviewed the sickness absence management procedures and issued new guidance to staff and managers. We continue to keep procedures under review and introduce new practices where necessary.

Details of the Agency staff who retired early are contained in the figures given for the former MAFF and its Agencies in the response given by DEFRA.

*Letter from Peter Greig-Smith to David Maclean, dated September 2001:*

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has asked me to reply to your question regarding how many days, on average, were lost due to sickness. I am replying on behalf of the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS).

The number of days lost per employee in CEFAS averages out, over the past six year, as nine days. However I would refer the Honourable Member to the annual Cabinet Office reports which provide a comprehensive analysis of sickness absence in the Civil Service, copies of which are to be found in House Libraries.

This Agency's response to the second part of the Parliamentary Question on early retirements is to be included in the single reply in respect of the core-department and its agencies.

## Viral Organisms

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what work has been undertaken by her Department on infection control of viral organisms in the last five years. [5250]

**Mr. Morley:** An extensive research programme is in place to address the problem of infection by viral organisms in livestock.

The rapid diagnosis and control of disease are fundamental aspects of the research programme together with epidemiological studies and work on pathogenicity and immunity. The programme of research covers a range of viral-induced diseases, including statutory and exotic diseases and those that are non-statutory or endemic within the UK.

Several viral diseases are covered by this programme of research including foot and mouth disease, classical swine fever and African swine fever, influenza, rabies and Newcastle disease.

## Meat Imports

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the advantages of using sniffer dogs at points of entry to the UK to detect illegal meat imports. [5352]

**Mr. Morley:** We are looking at a number of ways to improve our ability to detect illegal imports of agricultural products. We have not yet reached any decision on the most efficient and cost-effective approach.

## Landfill Tax

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of landfill tax will be given to the local authorities which are responsible for waste management, in order to fund recycling initiatives in *(a)* the current year and *(b)* 2002–03. [5195]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Landfill site operators can contribute a proportion of landfill tax revenue to a range of projects via the landfill tax credit scheme. Under the rules of the scheme, local authorities

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cannot receive funding from this source. However, the hon. Member may be interested to note that up to 31 August 2001, 15 Environmental Bodies (EB's) based in the county of Essex had spent approximately £1.2 million on sustainable waste management related projects.

The Government's policy, as set out in 'Waste Strategy 2000', is that the landfill tax credit scheme should be delivering an increase in recycling. The Treasury has subsequently issued indicative guidelines which said spend on sustainable waste management projects should increase to 65 per cent. of the credits available through the scheme, with at least a third of this being spent on recycling projects.

In the 2001 Budget statement the Chancellor said that in the longer term the Government are attracted to replacing the scheme, in whole or in part, with a public expenditure programme. That remains the position, although we have made no decisions yet about abolishing or radically changing the existing scheme.

## Southern Water

**Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will instruct Ofwat to require Southern Water to review the main sewer system in the Little Stove and Nailbourne Valley; and if he will publish the results. [5189]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Ofwat is an independent economic regulator of the water industry. The Secretary of State does issue periodic guidance to the Director General of Ofwat on regulatory issues, but his independent status means that we do not have the power to instruct or request specific actions from him.

Each sewerage undertaker is required to maintain its network of sewers and set priorities for work where this is necessary. Although Ofwat sets price limits, which constrains the revenue available, it does not specify the particular programme of work the undertaker must carry out.

## Combined Heat and Power

**Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the installed capacity for CHP is; and what she expects this to be in *(a)* 2005 and *(b)* 2010. [5767]

**Mr. Meacher:** The DTI's recent UK Digest of Energy Statistics gives a figure of 4,632 MWe at the end of 2000 for Good Quality CHP capacity. At present, no projection of capacity for 2005 has been made. The Government have a target to more than double Good Quality CHP capacity to at least 10,000 MWe by 2010.

**Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what further measures the Government plans to introduce to encourage the installation of CHP to ensure that the target of 10 GWe is reached by 2010. [5766]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Department is developing, in close collaboration with DTI and other Departments, a draft CHP Strategy, which will set out the measures needed to achieve the CHP target by 2010.

**Joan Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the current installed capacity is for CHP; and what she expects this to be in 2005 and 2010. [5185]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The DTI's recent UK Digest of Energy Statistics gives a figure of 4,632 MWe at the end of 2000 for Good Quality CHP capacity. At present, no projection of capacity for 2005 has been made. The Government have a target to more than double Good Quality CHP capacity to at least 10,000 MWe by 2010.

**Joan Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what further measures the Government will introduce to encourage the installation of CHP to ensure that the target of 10 Gwe is reached by 2010. [5187]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The Department is developing, in close collaboration with DTI and other Departments, a draft CHP Strategy, which will set out the measures needed to achieve the CHP target by 2010.

## Green Ministers

**Mrs. Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the Green Minister for each Government Department. [5770]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Green Ministers for each Government Department are as follows:

| *Name* | *Department* |
|---|---|
| Right hon. Michael Meacher MP, Minister of State (Environment) (Chair) | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| Right hon. Harriet Harman QC MP, Solicitor General | Law Officers Department |
| Right hon. Paul Boateng, Financial Secretary | Treasury |
| Peter Hain MP, Minister for Europe | Foreign and Commonwealth Office |
| Right hon. Alun Michael, Minister of State (Rural Affairs) | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| Brian Wilson QC MP, Minister for Industry and Energy | Department of Trade and Industry |
| Right hon. Baroness Blackstone, Minister for the Arts | Department for Culture, Media and Sport |
| George Foulkes MP, Minister of State | Scotland Office |
| Christopher Leslie MP, Parliamentary Secretary | Cabinet Office |
| Rosie Winterton MP, Parliamentary Secretary | Lord Chancellor's Department |
| Angela Eagle MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Home Office |
| Hilary Benn MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Department for International Development |
| Right hon. Baroness Hollis of Heigham, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Department for Work and Pensions |
| Dr. Alan Whitehead MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions |
| Yvette Cooper MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Department of Health |
| Baroness Ashton of Upholland, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Department for Education and Skills |
| Dr. Lewis Moonie MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Ministry of Defence |

| Name | Department |
|---|---|
| Desmond Browne MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Northern Ireland Office |
| Don Touhig MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State | Wales Office |

## Environmental Appraisals

**Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many environmental appraisals have been produced and held on DEFRA's central database since it was established, broken down by Government Department. [5771]

**Mr. Meacher:** Departments are required to publish all free-standing environmental appraisals of policies unless there are overriding reasons for not doing so (for example, security or commercial sensitivities). The Second Annual Report of the Green Ministers Committee, published in November 2000, included a list of free-standing environmental appraisals (Table 4.2). Since publishing this report, the Inland Revenue has carried out one further appraisal, published in 2001: DEFRA has received notification of a further 18 appraisals carried out in DETR up to February 2001.

*Total figures by Department*

| Department | Number of published appraisals notified to DEFRA |
|---|---|
| DETR | 45 |
| DTI | 4 |
| HMT | 2 |
| Joint HMT, C&E, DETR | 1 |
| IR | 2 |
| MOD | 1 |

## Power Plants (Fish)

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what research the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has undertaken to evaluate the success of fish deterrent systems, with particular reference to bubble screens and acoustic devices in reducing entrapment; [5632]

(2) what action the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has taken to enforce juvenile protection zones for bass in UK estuaries; [5628]

(3) what estimate the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has made of the number of *(a)* juvenile and *(b)* protected fish killed each year by cooling water intakes at power stations; [5630]

(4) how much money the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has spent over the last 10 years on research into fish deterrent systems to reduce the loss of fish in power plant cooling systems; [5633]

(5) what research projects the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has undertaken into the loss of fish in power plant cooling systems; [5629]

(6) what meetings she has held with *(a)* her French counterparts and *(b)* the US Environmental Protection Agency to discuss juvenile fish killed by cooling water intakes at power stations; [5627]

(7) what information the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has collected on the number of coastal or estuarine power stations that *(a)* reduce their pumping rates to avoid killing fish and *(b)* use fish deterrent systems or acoustic devices. [5631]

**Mr. Morley:** The development and testing of fish deterrent systems has been carried out by those interested in the operational side of power station cooling plants. The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has not therefore been directly involved. Neither are we aware of the extent to which mitigation measures are applied around the country. This is a matter for the power station operators themselves.

The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has worked with staff of the former CEGB and the Environment Agency in monitoring fish impingement in a number of coastal power stations since the early 1970s. In general, this monitoring has indicated that the mortality caused in marine fish by power stations is small by comparison with the widespread distribution of these species and the overriding impact of natural mortality and additional fishing mortality.

In 1983, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science conducted an investigation to estimate the losses of commercial fish species (sprat, herring, cod, whiting, dab, sole and plaice) at Sizewell 'A' power station. These fish kills were calculated to the between 0.01 and 0.08 per cent. of commercial catches in the southern North Sea. A further study of the mortality of juvenile bass at Kingsnorth power station in the Medway Estuary in 1987–88 concluded that the mortality of first year bass during peak impingement in autumn and winter was around 15 per cent. of the population in the immediate vicinity of the power station. This is significantly less than the percentage of juveniles which die as a result of predation, disease and even starvation in their first winter. The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science has since withdrawn from such monitoring.

To date, the Secretary of State has not held any meetings with her international counterparts about this particular problem.

The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science is not responsible for enforcement of the legislation relating to bass nursery areas. This is conducted by the Sea Fisheries Inspectorate, Sea Fisheries Committees and the Environment Agency.

## IACS Forms

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make it her policy not to impose penalties on farmers where errors on integrated administration and control system forms lead to an underclaim. [5747]

**Mr. Morley:** Penalties are not normally applied to errors that lead to an underclaim. Where there are different rates of aid for different crop groups within a

claim there can be a large underclaim in one crop group and a smaller overclaim in another so in global area terms there is an underclaim. However, penalties would still be applied to the overclaim.

### Winter Feeding Assistance

**Mr. Swire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will provide financial assistance to farmers to help with feeding their animals over the winter. [5494]

**Mr. Morley:** My officials are in touch with the Arthur Rank Foundation and with industry bodies about the work of the ARF's National Fodder Bureau and Government match funding for this charitable work.

### Agricultural Development Advisory Service

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what the average cost is to public funds, per journey, of ADAS monitoring transport from farm to slaughterhouse; and what the average cost is, per journey, for livestock transported from the Isle of Wight; [5090]

(2) what the value is of her contracts with ADAS for monitoring the transport of livestock from farm to slaughterhouse; [5180]

(3) what proportion of journeys of livestock from farm to slaughterhouse ADAS is required to monitor under contract from her Department. [5089]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The Department does not have a contract with ADAS to monitor the transport of livestock from farm to slaughterhouse. Temporary arrangements were operated, under ADAS supervision, to allow livestock from the Devon Infected Area to move to a slaughterhouse outside that Infected Area.

As part of a general contract to provide assistance for Foot and Mouth Disease issues, ADAS monitors the transport of livestock moving for welfare reasons under a Longer Distance Movement Licence.

### Slaughter and Disposal Scheme Applications

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many applications under *(a)* the over-30-months scheme and *(b)* the welfare scheme have been outstanding with her Department for (i) more than one week, (ii) two to four weeks, (iii) four to six weeks and (iv) more than six weeks. [5177]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Both the Over-30-Months (Slaughter) Scheme (OTMS) and the Livestock Welfare (Disposal) Scheme are administered by the Intervention Board (IB).

*(a)* No applications are required to be made to IB in respect of OTMS. Entry to the scheme is via a booking system operated by participating abattoirs. The latest survey of this list shows that approximately 50,000 head have been booked in and are awaiting slaughter. This represents around three weeks throughput at current levels.

*(b)* All applications under Livestock Welfare (Disposal) Scheme (LW(D)S) received at the Intervention Board are scrutinised by a team of experts from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) within seven days of receipt. Each application is checked for eligibility and, if acceptable under the scheme, is prioritised for slaughter. An application for which no additional information is required will normally be slaughtered within about 14 days. In the most urgent of welfare cases slaughter can be arranged within 48 hours of application. Where there is insufficient information supporting the application or further clarification is required, the applicant is asked to provide this. In turn this may require applicants to seek information from other sources. The application will be approved or rejected once this information is available. The length of time it takes to reach that stage is dependent on the speed with which applicants reply to any request for further information.

### Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme

**Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if interest will be paid on payments outstanding following the 21-day window for slaughter under the Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme. [6056]

**Mr. Morley:** When the Livestock Welfare (Disposal) Scheme was opened in March, the Intervention Board said it would aim to make payments within 21 days of slaughter. There has been enormous demand for the scheme, with over 1.5 million animals having been slaughtered and over 15,000 claims amounting to £175 million paid. The number of applications far exceeded all forecasts at the time the scheme was introduced. In addition, the increasing complexity of the eligibility rules as movement restrictions were lifted and the large number of points in the disposal chain from which documentation had to be returned have contributed to delays in payments of claims. These delays are regrettable but in the circumstances unavoidable.

I am pleased to say that the Intervention Board has now cleared its backlog of claims and is making payments on over 90 per cent. of claims which do not require any further investigation within 28 days of slaughter. Against the background of logistical difficulties and unanticipated volumes already referred to, payment of interest is not considered appropriate.

**Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the steps she intends to take to speed up payments made under the Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme. [6057]

**Mr. Morley:** Steps have already been taken by the Intervention Board to enhance payment performance. Currently over 90 per cent. of claims not subject to query or investigation are being paid within 28 days of slaughter.

### Fodder and Grazing

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the price and availability of *(a)* fodder and *(b)* grazing for livestock (i) nationally and (ii) on the Isle of Wight. [5176]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* My officials are in touch with the Arthur Rank Foundationand with industry bodies about the work of the ARF's National Fodder Bureau and Government match funding for this charitable work. These discussions have included consideration of the prices and availability of fodder and grazing across the country.

### Set-aside

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much farming land is in set-aside land in the UK. [5415]

**Mr. Morley:** The area of land set-aside in the UK under the Arable Area Payments Scheme in 2001 is provisionally assessed as 844,805 hectares.

### Correspondence

**Sir Brian Mawhinney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the right hon. Member for North-West Cambridgeshire will receive a reply to his letter of 26 March on behalf of his constituent Mrs. Hall. [5936]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July]:* I replied to the right hon. Member's letter on 21 August.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what target she has set for the length of time her Department takes to answer letters from *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* members of the public. [7561]

**Mr. Morley:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set different targets for the length of time that the DEFRA may take to reply to correspondence from hon. Members and members of the public.

The Department's target for responding to letters from hon. Members is 15 working days. This is also the Department's target for replying to correspondence from members of the public, except in the regional offices of the Rural Payments Agency and the Rural Development Service, where the target is 10 working days.

### MAFF Officials

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many officials previously employed by MAFF were not transferred to her Department. [5698]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* All officials previously employed by MAFF were transferred to the new Department.

### Building Materials (Dioxins)

**Tom Brake:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the report into the dioxin levels in building materials will be published; if she will place the report in the Library; and if she will make a statement. [5851]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* The Environment Agency currently expects to complete its investigation into the production and fates of solid residues from municipal waste incinerators in December. The results will be published shortly afterwards, and a copy of the report will be placed in the Library in due course.

### Lambs

**Mr. Boris Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps the Government have taken to address the impact on animal welfare of farmers being unable to sell this year's light lamb crop as a result of the continuation of the export ban. [6340]

**Mr. Morley:** The Government have taken steps to avoid welfare problems being developed by lambs that have no market outlet—principally light lambs, nearly all of which go to the export trade. The livestock welfare disposal scheme has been extended to pre-empt a welfare situation developing among light lamb. £10 per lamb will be paid. It has to be clear to the farming industry that this is a one-off scheme—it will not be repeated next year—so decisions have to be based on that in terms of breeding plans for next year. Our priority is to ensure that we encourage as far as possible the sale of lambs into the food chain.

**Adam Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has held with the Rural Affairs Secretary at the National Assembly concerning the likely trend in lamb prices during the autumn. [6316]

**Mr. Morley:** Ministers in this Department are in regular contact with their opposite numbers in the devolved Administrations on a wide range of topics, including the market prospects for lamb.

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much the Government estimate, the buying up of lighter lambs will cost in *(a)* 2001 and *(b)* 2002 (i) in total and (ii) per lamb. [6660]

**Mr. Morley:** Under the Light Lamb Scheme introduced from September 2001, the Government are prepared to pay £10 for the buying up of light lambs for which there is currently no export market because of the foot and mouth export ban. This could cost up to £25 million in purchase costs but estimates of uptake are uncertain. The scheme will not operate in 2002. We expect farmers to seek to sell lambs into the food chain as their first priority.

### Farmland Birds

**Hugh Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to seek to increase the numbers of farmland birds. [6001]

**Mr. Morley:** This Department has a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to reverse the long-term decline in the number of farmland birds by 2020. A number of existing policy measures will help to achieve that target—not least the significant expansion of our agri-environment schemes under the England Rural Development Programme. However, we recognise that the reasons for the decline in farmland bird numbers are complex and we have commissioned research from the British Trust for

Ornithology and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to help us identify more precisely what needs to be done to deliver the PSA target.

### Fly Tipping

**Mr. Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent assessment the Government have made of the occurrence of fly tipping; and if she will make a statement. [6292]

**Mr. Meacher:** The action being taken by the Government on fly tipping, and other forms of unlawful waste disposal, was set out most recently in the Government's response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee's Report on the Environment Agency (Cm 4832—paragraphs 55–60).

### Wetlands

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) when a water Bill, including provision to protect wetland habitats, will be introduced; and if she will make a statement; [5465]

(2) what recent discussions she has had with the RSPB on the future of wetlands. [5467]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* We will introduce the Water Bill as soon as parliamentary time allows. The Bill will contain provision to improve water resources management and stronger powers to deal with abstractions that are causing environmental damage.

The Department is routinely in discussion with RSPB on a range of wetland related issues. In particular, RSPB is a member of the UK Ramsar Committee chaired by the Department which meets every six months to take an overview of the UK's implementation of the Convention on Wetlands.

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment her Department has made of which breeds of birds depend on wetlands for survival in the United Kingdom. [5466]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* My statutory scientific advisers on wildlife conservation, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, conduct work on assessing bird populations of wetland areas throughout the UK. We know from surveys and research that many different species of bird depend on wetland habitats for their survival. To allow thorough assessment of these species throughout the year, several different national surveys are carried out regularly and are complemented by occasional special surveys.

For example, the Wetland Bird Survey is a long-running survey of all waterbird species on UK wetlands (2,000 sites are surveyed in every month from September to March of each year). It is run in partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology, The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which breeds of birds are at risk from threats to wetland areas. [5468]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* All species of bird that depend upon wetland habitats at any time of the year are at risk from threats to those habitats. Several wetland birds, such as the bittern, aquatic warbler and reed bunting, are regarded as priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and Species Action Plans have been agreed that outline the conservation actions needed. The Government have taken a variety of steps to conserve wetland habitats, including designation as Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas, and Sites (or Areas) of Special Scientific Interest. A variety of schemes provide positive management incentives.

### Departmental Contracts

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the top 10 companies to which her Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6423]

**Mr. Morley:** The top 10 companies to which the Department contracted out construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months as defined by the values of the contracts being undertaken for the Department are as follows:

Kajima Cambridge Ltd. (PFI scheme)
Kier Construction Ltd.
Chase Norton Ltd.
Keller Engineering Ltd.
Bryen Langley Ltd.
Clean Room Construction Ltd.
Barnes & Elliott Ltd.
Thomas Armstrong Ltd.
Walter Lilley Construction Ltd.
Symons Construction Ltd.

### Organic Produce

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with EU partners on ensuring common standards for organic produce; and if she will make a statement. [5949]

**Mr. Morley:** I have had no such discussions, but my officials are in regular contact with our European partners in respect of the enforcement and development of the common standards for organic production laid down by Council Regulation (EEC) 2092/91 as amended.

### Milk Prices

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps the Government are taking to increase the price of milk. [6245]

**Mr. Morley:** None, the price of milk is entirely a matter for the commercial market.

### Reprotech

**Mr. Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) how many complaints to the Environment Agency have been made since 1997 in respect of the Reprotech site at Pebsham, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex; [6355]

(2) if she will place in the Library the results of the Environment Agency emissions tests carried out at the Reprotech site, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex since 1997; [6354]

(3) how many Environment Agency unannounced inspections of the Reprotech site at Pebsham, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex have been carried out since 1997. [6353]

**Mr. Meacher:** As of 19 September, 117 complaints had been made to the Environment Agency since the beginning of 1997 in respect of the Reprotech site at Pebsham, Bexhill on Sea. From 1997 to date the Environment Agency has carried out 46 inspections of the site, 18 of which have been unannounced. Throughout this period the company has been compliant from a regulatory point of view. Results of the company's emissions monitoring from 1997 to date will be placed in the House Library.

## Wildlife Crime

**Mr. Breed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if she will refer proposed changes to the bird registration system, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime for comments; [6540]

(2) pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) of 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 170W, on wildlife crime birds of prey, if she will *(a)* give a commitment to the retention of the bird registration system for species currently listed and *(b)* consider adding globally endangered species threatened by trade to the system; [6544]

(3) how many convictions for possession of birds listed on Schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which have relied on DNA samples as evidence, have been successful; and for how many of these her Department provided registration details, maintained under section 7 of the Act, to the police; [6542]

(4) what fees are charged to birdkeepers by her Department for registration of birds listed on Schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and to what extent these fees cover the cost of running the registration scheme. [6543]

**Mr. Meacher:** There have been a total of 15 convictions for possession of birds listed on Schedule 4 of the Act, which have relied on DNA evidence. DEFRA released information from the database, held under section 7 of the Act, in relation to each of these convictions.

The fees charged to bird keepers are set out as follows. In 2000–01 the income generated covered 18.4 per cent. of the costs of running the registration service.

*Birds of prey*

| | *Non-club members* | *Recognised club members* | *Zoo federation members* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Renewal of properly registered birds | £9 per bird | £7 per bird | £7 per bird |
| Registration of new birds | £20 per monitored bird | £14 per monitored bird | £14 per monitored bird |
| | £9 per non-monitored bird | £7 per non-monitored bird | £7 per non-monitored bird |
| Transfers (payable by recipient) | £17 for every bird | £17 for every bird | £17 for every bird received from non Federation members[1] |

[1] No charge if received from federation members

*Other Birds*

Renewal of properly registered birds: £1 per bird up to a maximum of £25

Registration of new birds: £6 per bird

Transfers (payable by recipient): £6 for every bird.

As to the future of the bird registration system, including its scope, we shall be consulting widely before reaching any decisions, and so I cannot give any commitments about the eventual outcome. The consultation process will certainly include the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime who represent an important section of the law enforcement community.

## Abandoned Vehicles (Stroud)

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many vehicles have been abandoned and had to be disposed of in each of the last two years in the Stroud district; and what was the cost of disposal in each year. [6524]

**Mr. Meacher:** This is a matter for Stroud district council. The Department currently holds no central records of either the number of vehicles abandoned each year or local authorities' costs in disposing of them.

Information on the number of abandoned vehicles removed by local authorities is being collected in the Department's 2000–01 Municipal Waste Management Survey.

## Live Animal Exports

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the Government's policy on the transport of live animals. [6621]

**Mr. Bacon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to improve the conditions for animals which are exported alive; and if she will make a statement. [6648]

**Mr. Morley:** Our policy on the transport of live animals is rigorously to enforce the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997 and to negotiate for the highest possible animal welfare standards on an EU-wide basis. We are currently pursuing this objective in EU Council Working Groups on both the EU Directive on the protection of animals during transport and the Regulation on the standards for vehicles used for the long distance transport of livestock. But where possible, we believe that meat, rather than live animals, should be transported over long distances.

### Officials (Practical Experience)

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many officials in her Department *(a)* in London and *(b)* in Leeds have (i) working and practical experience of farming and (ii) working and practical experience of veterinary practice. [6625]

**Mr. Morley:** This information is not recorded and is available only at disproportionate cost.

### Refurbishment Projects

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by her Department in (i) the current and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6583]

**Mr. Morley:** The information is as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| *The current year* | |
| *Building* | |
| Great Orton Containment Wall | 4.2 |
| DEFRA Drayton TSE/BSE Buildings | 5.0 |
| DEFRA Old Rectory TSE/BSE Buildings | 2.1 |
| VLA Weybridge Redevelopment Work | 3.0 |
| *Refurbishment* | |
| Ergon House | 4.1 |
| Cromwell House | 1.2 |
| *The next financial year* | |
| *Building* | |
| VLA Weybridge Redevelopment Phase I | 24.5 |
| Cambridge, Redevelopment of Government Offices | PFI scheme |
| *Refurbishment* | |
| 9 Millbank | 2.3 |

### Pheasants

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she intends to take to ensure that animal welfare standards applicable to agricultural practice apply equally to *(a)* pheasant rearing and *(b)* pheasant shooting when carried out as sporting activities. [7255]

**Mr. Morley:** The Protection of Animals Act 1911 applies to captive pheasants. There are no plans to extend the 1911 Act to birds that have been released for sporting activities.

### Metal Deposits

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what assessment her Department has made of threats posed by the metal deposits to *(a)* humans and *(b)* livestock; [7159]

(2) what assessment she has made of the recent study by the University of Wales of dangerous levels of mineral deposits from lead and copper mines in the rivers Swale and Ouse and in other areas of the Vale of York and in particular the grasslands bordering these rivers; and if she will make a statement; [7160]

(3) what action her Department is taking over the discovery of toxic metal deposits on North Yorkshire farmland, deposited following the floods of 2000. [7158]

**Mr. Meacher:** We understand that the results of a study by the University of Wales at Aberystwyth into metal levels in river sediments deposited on floodplains in Swaledale have not yet been published. However, from the information so far available it appears that the lead levels found are similar to those found in previous studies in this area, where elevated levels of lead are sometimes found as a result of natural geology and historical mining activities. This is well known in the area and has been the subject of advice to local farmers in the past which has proved effective. Farmers can minimise risks to livestock from these deposits by simple good husbandry practices, to minimise the ingestion of soil by animals as they feed. The Food Standards Agency's standing advice is that these measures should also be effective in minimising any risks to consumers of foods produced by animals in these areas. The Veterinary Laboratories Agency have recorded no increases in livestock health problems that could be linked to the recent flooding.

A new European Commission Regulation ((EC) 466/2001), setting maximum limits for lead and cadmium in food and due to come into force on 5 April 2002, will introduce limits for cadmium in offal for the first time in the UK, and a lower limit for lead in offal than the current UK limit. The Food Standards Agency will be carrying out formal consultation on these proposals later this year. In parallel, it will be consulting Government and other stakeholders on whether any further guidance to farmers may be appropriate to help minimise any risks that offal from animals raised in areas where elevated levels of lead in soil occur could exceed these new limits.

The Department will assess the full results of this study when they are available, seeking advice from the Food Standards Agency on food safety issues. A risk assessment will be completed, and all the appropriate public authorities will be involved in the consideration of the findings.

### Fisheries Statistics

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what volume of fish was *(a)* landed and *(b)* discarded in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) the European Union in the last year for which figures are available. [7242]

**Mr. Morley:** Details of fish landings into the UK in 2000 are published in Section 3 of United Kingdom Sea Fisheries Statistics 1999 and 2000. This is available in the House of Commons Library.

Only incomplete information on landings into other member states of the EU is currently available, as set out.

*Fish landings into national ports of other member states of the EU 1998–2999*

*Tonnes product weight*

| | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium | 18,795 | 18,608 | 17,988 |
| Denmark | 1,721,906 | 1,064,418 | 1,144,089 |
| Germany | 107,528 | — | — |
| Greece | 100,549 | 97,423 | 90,380 |
| Spain | 1,106,113 | 949,906 | — |
| France | 293,347 | 265,772 | 276,256 |
| Eire | — | — | — |
| Italy | 291,540 | 263,169 | 295,096 |
| Netherlands | 543,474 | 523,249 | 508,972 |

*Fish landings into national ports of other member states of the EU 1998–2999*

*Tonnes product weight*

| | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Portugal | 208,464 | 183,754 | — |
| Finland | 71,882 | 52,563 | 67,690 |
| Sweden | 391,067 | 326,756 | 314,330 |
| Total | 4,854,665 | 3,745,618 | 2,714,801 |

*Source:*
Eurostat

Comparable figures of the total quantities of fish discarded either by vessels from the UK or by those from other member states are not available. The majority of discards are undersized and unmarketable fish.

### Bovine Tuberculosis

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what impact the foot and mouth outbreak has had on *(a)* regular tuberculosis testing of cattle and *(b)* the culling of badgers for the study of TB. [7762]

**Mr. Morley:** Routine TB testing of cattle has been suspended since late February and there is now a backlog of TB tests to be completed.

The effect of foot and mouth disease on the culling trial was considered by the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB in its Third Report, and they concluded that:

> "it will be unavoidable that the recent food and mouth disease outbreak, which affects directly some of the trial areas, will have an impact on our work. The inevitable effect will be to extend the time needed to complete the work programme. It will also make some analyses more difficult. However, at this stage we consider the impact to be manageable and also we do have the flexibility to readjust some of the final trial areas."

### Flood Defences

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the guidance given by *(a)* DEFRA and *(b)* the Environment Agency to district councils and county councils to deal with a rise in sea level and flooding as a result of climate change. [7768]

**Mr. Morley:** The Government have provided specific guidance in relation to predicted sea level rise to all flood and coastal defence authorities since 1989. In December 1999 the guidance was reviewed, and promulgated in Flood and Coastal Defence Project Appraisal Guidance Volume 3—Economic Appraisal (FDPAG3, MAFF Publication PB 4650). In March 2000 guidance on potential changes in river flooding was provided in Flood and Coastal Defence Project Appraisal Guidance Volume 4—Approaches to Risk (FCDPAG4, MAFF Publication PB 4907).

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the extent and division of Governmental responsibility for flood prevention; and if she will make a statement. [7773]

**Mr. Morley:** Flood defence is a fully devolved matter. DEFRA has policy responsibility for flood defence in England; the devolved Administrations have responsibility in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Operating authorities are responsible for delivery of the flood defence service in England. The Environment Agency is the principal operating authority and exercises a general supervision over all matters relating to flood defence. Following the creation of DEFRA, the Department now has policy responsibility for all of the functions of the Environment Agency in England.

We are currently conducting a review of the funding arrangements in England and this may lead to consideration of the related institutional arrangements for delivering the service.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will announce the conclusions of her review of the effectiveness of the Flood Defence Committee arrangements. [8006]

**Mr. Morley:** The conclusions of the review of flood and coastal defence funding arrangements will be published later this autumn.

### Rural Businesses

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many rural businesses have closed since 3 May. [7752]

**Alun Michael:** There is no measure of the number of rural businesses which have "closed" in any given period but 54 businesses in which a bankruptcy or compulsory winding-up order was made between 12 April and 31 August have stated that foot and mouth disease was a cause of the insolvency.

In September we commissioned survey work to shed light on the economic impact of foot and mouth disease in selected rural areas. Around 40 per cent. of businesses in areas with widespread outbreaks of foot and mouth disease report being adversely affected, compared with 15 per cent. in areas with few or no outbreaks. Among affected businesses, 44 per cent. describe the impact as severe or very severe, with 21 per cent. reporting the loss of over half normal sales revenue between March and August. While most affected businesses report that they remain profitable, 13 per cent. report that an expected profit has turned to loss due to foot and mouth disease. However, two-thirds expect to be back to "business as usual" by mid-2002. We will publish the final report when it is complete later.

### Illegal Meat Imports

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much illegal meat was *(a)* imported into the UK and *(b)* confiscated from ports and airports in the last six months. [7750]

**Mr. Morley:** It is not possible to determine how much illegally imported meat was brought into the UK in the last six months. In that period we have received 849 reports of seizures of illegally imported animal products. The amount seized is not recorded in every case but the total weight notified is approximately 20 tonnes.

### Departmental Staff Training

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what training is given to DEFRA staff who are in direct contact with the public. [7774]

**Mr. Morley:** For staff who have direct contact with the public, a set of relevant courses are offered in DEFRA's core training programme or locally. Staff identify their development and training needs with their managers using the Department's competence framework and undertake the appropriate training. In addition, at group level key skills are identified and staff trained accordingly.

### Animal Disease Scientific Study

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects the scientific study into animal disease to make its recommendations. [7765]

**Mr. Morley:** The Royal Society has announced that it expects to make recommendations by summer 2002.

### Diversification

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farms have diversified in 2001 to date. [7961]

**Alun Michael:** It is impossible to give a simple figure in answer to this question as diversification comes in many forms, not all requiring official approval or financial support from the Government. The Government do provide support for farm diversification, including aid made available through the Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES), part of the England Rural Development Programme. 365 RES applications involving farm diversification activities had been received this year by 31 August.

### Nuclear Power

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what role nuclear power will play in the UK's climate change strategy; and if she will make a statement. [7754]

**Mr. Meacher:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 5 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 282W. The Government published the consultation document on radioactive waste policy mentioned in the previous answer on 12 September 2001, and this has been made available in the Libraries of the House.

### Sellafield

**Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list (1) the contracts for the supply of MOX fuel from Sellafield; [8034]

(2) the customers who gave information to Arthur D. Little about their intentions to order mixed oxide fuel for Sellafield. [7988]

**Mr. Meacher:** No. This information was excluded from the version of the Arthur D. Little report which we published on 27 July, because we concluded that publication would cause unreasonable damage to British Nuclear Fuels' commercial operations or to the economic case for the Sellafield MOX plant itself. The only customers specifically identified in the report, E.on of Germany and OKG of Sweden, had already publicised their commercial arrangements with the company.

### Pennine Bridleway

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the progress of the Pennine Bridleway in Cumbria. [5566]

**Alun Michael** *[holding answer 2 July 2001]:* I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 9 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

### Country Sports

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate the Government have made of the financial value of country sports in the last financial year. [6243]

**Alun Michael:** I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 28 September 2001, and placed a copy in the Library.

### Foot and Mouth

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if the official scientific advice on the cause of the Settle/Clitheroe foot and mouth hotspot has been revised since a pattern of spread down the Ribble and Aire river valleys has been established. [268]

**Margaret Beckett** *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* The Settle/Clitheroe outbreak began in the middle of May. The Department's epidemiologists' initial assessment was that the outbreak was caused by infection established in sheep and/or cattle from the movement of people, vehicles etc. from an infected area. However, further epidemiological investigation of the cases making up this outbreak suggests that infection has been present in the sheep population in the northern part of this cluster for some time. Infection is now believed to have been spread to the area by sheep via untraced sheep from Hawes market, or untraced sheep from Longtown market or via an intermediary market, holding or dealer in which disease was not manifested clinically or in which clinical signs were not observed.

This re-appraisal of the cause of the outbreak has not been influenced by the spread of disease down the Ribble and Aire river valleys. Following the initial introduction of infection, normal, seasonal sheep husbandry activities resulted in infection being transmitted to cattle making infection in the area obvious.

Further spread is thought to have been caused by the movements of people, vehicles and licensed movements of animals.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) when she proposes to visit *(a)* the Great Orton site, *(b)* the Hespin Wood site, *(c)* Longtown, *(d)* Wigton, *(e)* Penrith, *(f)* Shap, *(g)* Appleby-in-Westmorland, *(h)* Kirkby Stephen and *(i)* Glenridding in Cumbria; and what steps she will take to meet people affected by the foot and mouth disease outbreak; [3439]

(2) how many farms in Cumbria were infected by sheep from Gerwyn Abattoir at the start of the foot and mouth outbreak; [3559]

(3) what recent representations she has received from the RSPCA on foot and mouth disease; [3561]

(4) when she will publish the complete list of farmers in each county of the UK who had animals killed as a result of foot and mouth, broken down into categories of *(a)* infected premises, *(b)* direct contacts, *(c)* slaughter on suspicion, *(d)* contiguous cull and *(e)* voluntary cull, indicating the numbers of (i) cattle, (ii) sheep and (iii) pigs as appropriate; [3446]

(5) how many farmers *(a)* appealed against their stock valuations within the 14-day period and *(b)* have notified her Department that they disagree with their valuation but are outside the 14-day period; [3447]

(6) what is her estimate of the number of *(a)* cattle and *(b)* sheep disposed of in (i) the Great Orton site and (ii) the Hespin Wood site; [3434]

(7) how many *(a)* cattle and *(b)* sheep have been brought in from outside Cumbria for disposal at the Great Orton and Hespin Wood sites; [3435]

(8) how many farmers are waiting for compensation for *(a)* animals slaughtered for reasons connected with foot and mouth disease and *(b)* work done on the Department's behalf; and what the date of the oldest outstanding claim is. [3432]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 4 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what participation United Kingdom officials had in the Office International des Epizooties meeting on foot and mouth disease, held in Paris from 18 to 21 June. [3950]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 4 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what advice her Department gives farmers on how to clean a field that has held infested livestock; [4431]

(2) on what basis premises subject to contingency foot and mouth culling are decided. [4430]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 4 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much financial compensation has been paid to farmers as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak at the latest date for which figures are available. [4781]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 4 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what levels of dioxin releases were experienced from the burning of animal carcases during the foot and mouth crisis; and what measures were taken to ameliorate the effects of such releases. [4867]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 18 July 2001]:* I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 4 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) how many animals have been slaughtered in the categories *(a)* infected premises, *(b)* direct contacts, *(c)* contiguous cull, *(d)* slaughter on suspicion and *(e)* voluntary cull in each county in England, Wales and Scotland; [794]

(2) what action he has taken to examine and improve enforcement of existing import controls at all points of entry as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak; [2190]

(3) how much compensation has been paid to farmers whose stock has been culled on the grounds of *(a)* infected premises, *(b)* contiguous premises, *(c)* direct contact and *(d)* the 3km cull policy; [2185]

(4) if she will assess the consequential losses suffered by farmers unaffected by culls who farm in a restricted area; and if she will establish a recovery programme for such farmers; [2183]

(5) what assessment the Government have made of the contamination of water tables as a result of mass livestock burial; [2196]

(6) what assessment the Government have made of the discovery of blisters found in the mouths of livestock during the foot and mouth outbreak but unconnected to the disease; and what impact they have had on efforts to diagnose the virus; [2177]

(7) what estimate he has made of the consequential losses suffered by farmers whose animals are over 30 months old and are unable to proceed with the over 30-month-scheme; and if he will make them eligible for compensation; [2188]

(8) upon what basis the Government decided not to use vaccination in their efforts to eradicate foot and mouth disease; [2182]

(9) what assessment the Government have made of their decision not to use vaccination as an option to eradicate foot and mouth disease; [2171]

(10) in what circumstances farmers and others were asked to sign secrecy or confidentiality agreements with her Department in relation to the foot and mouth epidemic; [2758]

(11) what consideration the Government have given to providing compensation to those farmers who have not had livestock subjected to a cull but whose businesses have been severely affected by movement restrictions; [2762]

(12) how many foot and mouth suspected cases that resulted in slaughter on suspicion *(a)* in Cumbria and *(b)* nationally subsequently received negative results from blood tests; [2569]

(13) what representations have been made to the Government by temporary veterinary staff about the efficacy of the *(a)* biosecurity measures taken by the agricultural industry, *(b)* disinfecting operation and *(c)* contiguous cull operation; [2550]

(14) what strategy the Government plan to put in place to alleviate the effect on employment in farming communities arising from the foot and mouth outbreak; [2547]

(15) if the official figures for foot and mouth disease include calves and lambs slaughtered; [2735]

(16) how many *(a)* firms of contractors and *(b)* individuals are engaged in the dismantling, disinfection and reassembly of milking parlours on farms in Cumbria; [2772]

(17) if she will make a statement on her latest plans to save hefted sheep flocks in the Lake District; [2743]

(18) how many animals have been slaughtered as a result of being classified as contiguous to premises which were confirmed as infected with foot and mouth and later received negative blood test results; [2567]

(19) what percentage of suspect cases reported in Cumbria as foot and mouth were tested; and how many of those farms received a positive test reaction; [2763]

(20) when she will *(a)* send every farm from which samples were taken for foot and mouth disease testing a copy of the results of the tests and *(b)* publish those results together with the names, addresses and holding numbers of the farms; [2750]

(21) what arrangements her Department made on the ground to ensure the accuracy of numbers of sheep taken in the voluntary cull in Cumbria. [3248]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what contingency plans she has to stop the spread of foot and mouth disease in *(a)* Vale of York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* Yorkshire and the Humber region. [3469]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Keetch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the Farm Assured British Beef and Lamb inspection policy will be revised to reflect the difficulties encountered by farmers with 'D' notice restrictions in selling their stock in the aftermath of foot and mouth disease; and if she will make a statement. [2583]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 9 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what proportion of livestock slaughtered from the outbreak of foot and mouth disease to 30 June *(a)* from holdings identified as infected and *(b)* from contiguous holdings, are estimated to have been infected with foot and mouth disease, in each county of England and in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; and if she will make a statement; [3893]

(2) how many livestock were slaughtered from the outbreak of foot and mouth disease to 30 June from *(a)* holdings identified as infected and *(b)* contiguous holdings, in (i) each county of England, (ii) Wales, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland. [3892]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Breed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the locations of the *(a)* burial sites, *(b)* rendering plants, *(c)* incinerators, *(d)* licensed landfills and *(e)* pyres that have been used to dispose of carcases from the foot and mouth outbreak, indicating the dates when each location was in use and the estimated number of carcases. [3854]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what records are maintained of visits to farms by her Department's vets carrying out precautionary inspections; [2760]

(2) what the average rate of *(a)* false negatives and *(b)* false positives in foot and mouth samples is from (i) cattle, (ii) sheep and (iii) deer; [2757]

(3) what the statutory basis is for setting a 14-day limit on farmers appealing against valuations of their stock; [3450]

(4) which lists of farmers included in the *(a)* 3km cull, *(b)* direct contact, *(c)* slaughter on suspicion and *(d)* contiguous culls have been circulated to (i) individuals and (ii) organisations outside Government Departments. [3454]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 8 August, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if she will make a statement on lifting the form D notices in *(a)* south Lancashire and *(b)* Lancashire; [2148]

(2) if she will make a statement on the continuation of form D notices in south Lancashire; [2147]

(3) if she will make a statement on the lifting of D restrictions in the Chorley constituency. [2689]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the risk of the new foot and mouth outbreak in Brecon spreading to Herefordshire and Worcestershire; and if she will make a statement. [2003]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 4 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she is taking to raise the level of insurance cover against future foot and mouth and other animal disease epidemics in the livestock farming industry. [2351]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 6 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what measures she will take to ensure that local roads are closed when culling is taking place; [4046]

(2) what representations she has received that those involved in the culls are not observing the strict biosecurity measures; [4045]

(3) what representations she has received on actions by her officials on an infected site covered by her Department's biosecurity provisions; [4048]

(4) what assessment she has made of the impact on Thirsk Auction Mart of its closure as a collection centre; and if she will make a statement; [4044]

(5) what criteria are used to decide on road closures in an infected zone; and if she will make a statement; [4047]

(6) what representations she has received on the three kilometre restriction zone from an infected premises. [4050]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 8 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food purchased railway sleepers prior to the foot and mouth outbreak; [2180]

(2) how much coal was bought by MAFF as part of contingency plans in the past five years; [2170]

(3) how many farms in the United Kingdom were not culled as a result of appeals or interventions by owners of livestock; [2771]

(4) what assessment the Government have made of the source of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease; and what provisions have been put in place to avert another outbreak; [2545]

(5) how many *(a)* lorry loads of sheep were collected from farms in the voluntary cull, *(b)* receipts were given by collection staff to farmers and *(c)* copies were published of the standard receipt/official collection documents; [3438]

(6) what verification procedures were undertaken by her Department at *(a)* Carlisle, *(b)* Page Street and *(c)* Alnwick before compensation for animals slaughtered on an IP was paid out. [3433]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 13 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will publish the contingency plans which have been put in place in the event of a significant increase in the incidence of new cases of foot and mouth; and if she will make a statement. [1828]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 13 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will review the compensation arrangements for farmers who have not had an outbreak of foot and mouth disease, but are unable to move their stock because they are under official D notice restrictions; and if she will make a statement. [2004]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 4 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 13 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will make a statement on the animal welfare implications of the methods of disposal chosen for animals culled under the foot and mouth programme, where such disposal was undertaken by members of the armed forces. [4177]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 16 July 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 13 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what contingency plans were in place for vaccination prior to the foot and mouth outbreak; and when those plans had been made. [2187]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 15 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the contractors under contract to her Department in *(a)* Cumbria and *(b)* England. [2764]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 17 August 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects to respond to the recommendations of the task force of the hills; and if she will make a statement. [2071]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to my hon. Friend by letter on 3 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much foot and mouth has cost the rural economy to date. [6248]

**Alun Michael:** I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 3 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much financial assistance is available to businesses in Cumbria to help them survive foot and mouth disease. [3440]

**Alun Michael:** I replied to the right hon. Member by letter on 9 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the damage to the agricultural and tourism sectors of the foot and mouth outbreak. [3468]

**Mr. Morley:** I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 11 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what scientific advice the Government have commissioned that contradicts aspects of the Government's foot and mouth slaughter policy; and if she will make a statement; [272]

(2) what divergence there has been between the projected number of daily foot and mouth outbreaks as presented by the chief Government adviser on 3 May and the actual number of outbreaks; [271]

(3) what the Government's current assessment is of the scientific assumptions that underpinned the Government's foot and mouth strategy as set out at the end of March; [274]

(4) on whose recommendation the change to the Government's slaughter policy in respect of foot and mouth, announced on 26 April, was made; and if she will make public the advice given on this matter; [739]

(5) if she will publish in full the advice sought and received from Professor Paul Kitching with regard to the Government's foot and mouth strategy. [287]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 25 June 2001]:* I replied to the hon. Member by letter on 19 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of the money generated annually from country shooting her Department estimates will be lost this year as a result of foot and mouth disease restrictions. [5671]

**Alun Michael** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* I replied to my hon. Friend on 28 September 2001, and placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the *(a)* date, *(b)* location and *(c)* numbers are of all deer found (i) dead and (ii) slaughtered on suspicion of foot and mouth; and what the results of laboratory tests were on these deer. [5355]

**Mr. Morley:** Seventy-one samples have been taken from deer that were found dead and submitted for testing. All results received have tested negative for evidence of the foot and mouth virus, antigens or antibodies.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information she has collated on the susceptibility of deer to foot and mouth. [5356]

**Mr. Morley:** All cloven-hoofed animals, including deer, are susceptible to foot and mouth disease. Wild deer tend to show mild or inapparent disease, resembling the disease in sheep, although some species (eg roe deer and muntjak deer in the UK) may be severely affected.

Deer can be carriers of the foot and mouth virus, and could transmit foot and mouth disease to susceptible livestock during the clinical stages of the disease. However, the Department's current veterinary risk assessment indicates that the risk of wild deer playing any significant part in the spread of foot and mouth disease is very low. There are therefore no plans at this stage to control wild deer populations, although as more information becomes available about the epidemiology of the disease in areas where there are wild deer, the risk assessment will be updated.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the cost is of producing and delivering the new foot and mouth disease biosecurity video. [5248]

**Mr. Morley:** The cost of producing and distributing the biosecurity video amounted to £142,000.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what evidence she has collated about the ability of *(a)* crows, *(b)* seagulls, *(c)* geese, *(d)* pigeons, *(e)* pheasants, *(f)* foxes and *(g)* badgers to spread foot and mouth by (i) body contact and (ii) other means. [5354]

**Mr. Morley:** Although none of these animals and birds is susceptible to foot and mouth disease, any of them could, in theory, play a role in spreading disease mechanically by moving contaminated material from one premises to another. However, there is no direct evidence of such spread in the current outbreak. The mechanical transmission of the FMD virus by rats and birds was the subject of research in the late 1960s/early 1970s. The risks were considered to be negligible if not zero.

In relation specifically to geese, a veterinary risk assessment has been carried out on the risk of migratory geese spreading foot and mouth disease. The conclusion of the assessment was that the risk of spreading FMD virus was "very low". The assessment may be found on the DEFRA website at: http://defraweb/footandmouth/disease/risks/risk12.htm.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if ring vaccination for foot and mouth actively was considered by her Department in the first week of the epidemic. [5265]

**Mr. Morley:** Vaccination against foot and mouth disease remains an option that is kept under continuous review. Ring vaccination is one possible approach, which aims to control the spread of infection within and outside an infected area. It reduces the amount of virus circulating in the area, as the vaccinated animals will be less infectious.

We did not ring vaccinate at the start of the outbreak because it was apparent that the virus had potentially been spread across a wide area, owing to the large number of movements that had taken place before the first case of foot and mouth disease was identified. This made ring vaccination an impractical option.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what instructions were given to the Post Office about disinfection of vehicles in foot and mouth risk areas. [5245]

**Mr. Morley:** MAFF provided the Post Office with general advice on the precautions they should take in the first few days of the outbreak. Detailed guidelines were subsequently drawn up on 12 March for all delivery companies. These guidelines were checked by veterinary staff, and the Post Office. A final version of the guidelines was sent to the Post Office on 25 March and placed on the Department's website on 10 April.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on how many occasions her Department has contacted farmers to inspect animals for foot and mouth which had been slaughtered. [5349]

**Mr. Morley:** We take every care to avoid making visits to premises where animals have been slaughtered due to the foot and mouth disease outbreak. However, the scale of the current outbreak means that occasional errors do occur. While there are no figures available, we believe these to be isolated incidents.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the Department first gave detailed advice to farmers on foot and mouth bio-security. [5247]

**Mr. Morley:** The Department's predecessor, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, issued a News Release on 22 February providing advice to farmers and the public, including advice on cleansing and disinfection. Foot and Mouth Disease Public Information Factsheet Number 2 (How to protect your farm) was sent to all livestock farmers on 5 March.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what farmers were involved in an advisory capacity in the production of the foot and mouth disease bio-security video. [5249]

**Mr. Morley:** An NFU representative with a farming background was involved at every stage of producing the biosecurity video which was distributed to all livestock farmers. He worked in collaboration with the production team, providing advice on the visual content, checking the script and making any changes necessary, and reviewing the 'rough cut' and final version of the video tape. The final version of the biosecurity video had the NFU's stamp of approval. The NFU representative in the Joint Communication Centre in London also had input in the cover letter to farmers which accompanied the video, signed by Chief Veterinary Officer, Jim Scudamore.

During taping itself, two farmers were directly involved because their properties featured in the video. One farmer was from Yorkshire and the other from the south-east.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the contractors used by her Department in Carlisle on *(a)* 1 March, *(b)* 1 April, *(c)* 1 May, *(d)* 1 June and *(e)* 10 July. [5241]

**Mr. Morley:** From information held centrally, the contractors who have been used by the Department in Carlisle on *(a)* 1 March, *(b)* 1 April, *(c)* 1 May, *(d)* 1 June and *(e)* 10 July (contractors dealt with MAFF up to and including 9 July and with DEFRA from 10 July onwards) are provided in a table available in the Libraries of the House.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reason washing soda was not included on the list of suitable foot and mouth disease disinfectants for washing farmers' clothes and boots. [5244]

**Mr. Morley:** Sodium carbonate (decahydrate) complying with BS 3674 of 1963 is approved as a disinfectant for use against foot and mouth disease when used at the approved dilution rate, as indicated on the list of approved disinfectants on the DEFRA website http:/defraweb/footandmouth/disease/disinfection/disinfect2.asp.

Further advice on the use of sodium carbonate for cleaning shoes and clothing can be found on the website at /disinfection/ph.asp.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the advantages and disadvantages of using vaccination against foot and mouth. [5289]

**Mr. Morley:** The Government's priority is to eradicate foot and mouth disease. The primary advantage of vaccination against foot and mouth disease is that it could help to contain the disease. The primary disadvantage of vaccination is that it does not remove the virus.

Detailed information about the issues to be considered in the use of vaccination and the underlying science is on the DEFRA website and is included in my letter of 13 September 2001 to all Members of Parliament.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the detailed information on foot and mouth bio-security available on the MAFF website was circulated to farmers in hard copy form. [5243]

**Mr. Morley:** Biosecurity information was first mailed to all farmers in England on 5 March 2001. This was supplemented by further information contained in mailings on 12 April, 21 April, and 17 May. All information was posted on the MAFF website at the time of mailing.

The 'Stopping the Spread' of disease campaign material (video and leaflet), which forms the core of the biosecurity information currently featured on the DEFRA website, was mailed on 6 July.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list in descending order the main ways in which the foot and mouth virus spreads. [5246]

**Mr. Morley:** Analyses have been completed for the first 1,903 infected farms, and epidemiological investigations continue on the most recent cases to determine the source of infection and method of spread.

Short distance aerosol spread cannot be distinguished from other causes of local spread within 3 km of infected premises, which accounts for 79 per cent. of cases. In these cases there is often a number of possible means of spread such as using common facilities, contaminated roadways and movement of people and farm vehicles. In addition, however, 107 cases have been specifically associated with lorry movements or movements of people.

In the latter part of the epidemic, transmission by vehicles, other inanimate objects and people have predominated.

The breakdown is as follows (as at 31 August 2001):

| GB | Total |
|---|---|
| Wind borne (not local) | 18 |
| Dairy tanker | 11 |
| Truck | 28 |
| Other inanimate object | 12 |
| Local[1] | 1,500 |
| Person | 68 |
| Infected animals | 89 |
| Under investigation | 177 |
| Grand total | 1,903 |

[1] IP within 3 km of another IP; exact source unclear, but associated with two or more means of spread through vehicles, people, inanimate objects and local aerosol spread

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many European vets have been taken off foot and mouth duties because of complaints from farmers about their *(a)* ability and *(b)* behaviour. [5348]

**Mr. Morley:** The number of European vets taken off foot and mouth duties because of complaints about their *(a)* ability and *(b)* behaviour is 2;

*(a)* ability is 0

*(b)* behaviour is 2

out of a total of 412 who have been dealing with foot and mouth disease.

*Note:*

These figures are correct as at 30 September 2001

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farm pyres in Cumbria have had to be re-lit with the use of diesel oil; and on how many occasions. [5353]

**Mr. Morley:** All 131 pyres were lit with diesel oil used as an accelerant. However some pyres needed to be stoked up with additional materials (pallets, straw etc.). No records were kept of the number of pyres that needed to be re-lit. On no occasion was a pyre re-lit using diesel oil only.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many vaccination shots against foot and mouth are available for use in the UK; and if she will describe the vaccine. [5252]

**Mr. Morley:** Vaccine is formulated from antigen (inactivated FMD virus) in a solution (adjuvant) which stimulates the immune response. The virus strain used is O1 Manisa.

As of the end of September 2001 we have 6.4 million doses of commercial antigen which would be enough to vaccinate at least 2.5 million animals. The exact number of doses needed per animal depends on the potency strength of the final vaccine, the number of doses given and the length of time we wish the animals to be protected. We have also placed a reserve on 125,000 doses of vaccine held in the European Vaccine Bank. This would have to be replaced if it was used.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the work being done with animal carcases at the Hallburn site, Longtown, Cumbria. [5347]

**Mr. Morley:** The DEFRA Hallburn site is used to transfer carcases of slaughtered animals to render vehicles for onward transportation to render plants. However, wherever possible, carcases are now being sent directly from the farm to the render plants. The Hallburn site is still needed in those cases where direct transfer from farm to render is not practical due to the small number of animals involved or where farms are inaccessible to the normal render wagons.

DEFRA is now looking for new sites in which to locate the render transfer facility, to reflect the fact that recent cases have been occurring in the south of the county, nearer to the render plants. If a new site is found, the facility at Hallburn will be decommissioned.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has received concerning *(a)* co-ordination by her Department's officials of efforts to combat foot and mouth and *(b)* the way in which her Department's officials observe the Department's biosecurity precautions; and if she will make a statement. [5507]

**Mr. Morley:** We have received a number of representations on both these issues from a wide range of interested parties.

Part of the Government's approach to combating the foot and mouth outbreak has been regular meetings with stakeholders at local and national level and the involvement of other key Government Departments and agencies, both in the regions and in a central Joint Co-ordination Centre (JCC). The Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) has provided a forum for high level and strategic co-ordination, chaired by Ministers. During the height of the disease, COBR met seven days a week (twice a day on Monday to Friday).

The Government's key priority is to eradicate foot and mouth disease as quickly as possible and vigilance and high standards of biosecurity are crucial. It is therefore imperative that DEFRA staff are seen to be applying good biosecurity measures at all times and at every available opportunity officials are reminded of this. Any breaches in these standards will be treated with the utmost seriousness.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations she has received requesting a full public inquiry into the foot and mouth crisis. [5508]

**Mr. Morley:** Ministers have received a number of representations from a variety of organisations and individuals regarding a full public inquiry into the current outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

On 9 August, the Prime Minister announced three independent inquiries into the lessons to be learned from the foot and mouth disease outbreak and the future of farming and the countryside. These will cover the lessons to be learned from the outbreak, to be chaired by Dr. Iain Anderson; a scientific review by the Royal Society to be chaired by Sir Brian Follett FRS; and a Policy Commission on the future of farming and food to be chaired by Sir Don Curry.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress has been made towards producing contingency plans for preventing the spread of foot and mouth through *(a)* the Vale of York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* the Yorkshire and the Humber Region. [5435]

**Mr. Morley:** Further to my letter of 6 August to the hon. Member, which is available in the Libraries of the House, I confirmed that a contingency plan had been drawn up and would be refined in the light of new developments. Detailed planning has continued to address the possibility of any resurgence of disease in Yorkshire. A revised version of the contingency plan was prepared in September. Following the success of the Thirsk Restricted Infected Area (RIA) the plan includes, among other things, provision for the establishment of further RIAs should they be needed. The plan will be kept under continuous review.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farms were visited by a vet from her Department before contracting foot and mouth disease during the current outbreak. [5618]

**Mr. Morley:** Ministry veterinary staff are required to visit farms as part of their day to day responsibilities. In the context of the current outbreak, these visits could include patrols or be for licensing reasons. We have no information on how many of these farms subsequently became infected premises.

Visits by DEFRA staff would be investigated as part of the epidemiological review. In the current epidemic there is no evidence of infection having been introduced by this means.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will set out in detail the steps taken by her Department to process claims for animals slaughtered on an infected premises, setting out the reasons for taking each such step. [5615]

**Mr. Morley:** A claim form signed by the owner, the valuer (if applicable) and departmental official who attended the valuation is submitted to the local animal health office where initial scrutiny of the claim is carried out. A record is kept of all claims submitted and copies of the form are retained. The claim is then sent to Page street HQ in London where it is processed for payment, except for payments under the Cumbrian 3km cull which were sent direct to the DEFRA finance unit at Alnwick.

At Page street all claims are checked for arithmetical correctness and to ensure they are correctly signed by valuer, owner and departmental official. The number of animals claimed for the dates the animals were valued and slaughtered are checked against centrally held records and any discrepancies resolved. On some occasions, additional information is requested from valuers to substantiate the value for some animals. The reason for the checks is to ensure the Department pays the correct amount of compensation for the right number of animals slaughtered to the rightful owner of the animals.

After payment has been approved at an appropriate level, a payment request is sent to the DEFRA finance unit at Alnwick, along with bank account details to enable payment to be made to the claimant by BACS transfer. Where bank details are not available payment is made by cheque.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farmers in Cumbria have been notified that the numbers of sheep collected by lorries in the voluntary cull were less than the numbers previously valued. [5547]

**Mr. Morley:** DEFRA/MAFF received over 2,100 compensation claims in total as a result of the 3km cull. Around 200 farmers were initially paid for less than the total number of animals shown on the valuation. This was because of differences between the number of animals valued and the number shown as collected.

Farmers who were not paid their full valuation were told that the reduction was an interim measure to allow us to pay them something and they were given an opportunity to make representations and submit additional information to allow us to reassess their case. Following receipt of additional evidence and information we have authorised 169 additional payments in respect of the valuations originally reduced because of discrepancies between numbers claimed and collected.

**Mr. Swire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much compensation has been paid to date to people affected by foot and mouth in East Devon. [5745]

**Mr. Morley:** It is difficult to establish the exact amount of compensation paid to particular parts of a county or region. From the information currently available the provisional amount paid in statutory compensation for foot and mouth disease to producers in Devon is £86,901,302.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what restrictions are placed on the import of meat from countries in which foot and mouth disease is endemic; [5178]

(2) in which countries foot and mouth disease is endemic; and from which of those countries the importation of *(a)* carcases, *(b)* raw meat and *(c)* cooked meat is permitted. [5179]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* Community legislation does permit the importation of meat and meat products from certain countries where foot and mouth disease is endemic but only where the disease is restricted to specific areas. Imports are only permitted from parts of the country that are free of disease or under conditions that ensure the meat does not represent any health risk. These provisions are in line with the recommendations of the Northumberland Committee following the 1967 outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the UK.

All meat and meat products imported from third countries must be accompanied by veterinary certification, which includes confirmation that the meat is derived from animals which have been subjected to an ante-mortem inspection during the 24 hours prior to slaughter in order to confirm, among other things, that the animal shows no signs of foot and mouth disease.

If there is an outbreak of disease likely to present a risk to human or animal health such as foot and mouth disease, Community legislation allows us to ban imports of meat from all, or parts, of the country concerned. Recent examples include Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Swaziland, Uruguay and Zimbabwe, and within the EU, France, the Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland.

All meat and meat products imported into the UK from third countries must enter at designated UK Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) where they are subject to veterinary inspections. All consignments are subject to

documentary and identity checks and at least 20 per cent. of consignments undergo physical checks. These ensure import conditions are met and that the products remain in a satisfactory condition. They are carried out by Official Veterinary Surgeons (OVSs) employed by the local authority in which the BIP is located.

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what help will be provided to farmers affected by foot and mouth disease to enable them to return to farming. [6206]

**Mr. Morley:** The previous Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East and Wallsend (Mr. Brown), announced on 8 May a range of measures amounting to £15.4 million, made up of: £10.4 million for an enhanced Farm Business Advice Service (FBAS) offering up to five days of free business advice for farmers whose livestock have been slaughtered under the foot and mouth control measures; £2 million in grant aid made available under a new round of the Agricultural Development Scheme, to improve marketing performance and competitiveness of sectors affected by foot and mouth; £3 million for a targeted trade development and market campaign, made available through Food from Britain who will co-ordinate their campaign with the Countryside Agency, Meat and Livestock Commission and others with an active interest.

FBAS is a free and confidential service which is provided by an experienced farm business adviser and is available to any farmer in England who has had stock compulsorily slaughtered as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak. We have sent a letter to all farmers in this category.

An adviser will review the farmer's business and arrange for an environmental evaluation to be conducted by an appropriate specialist. The adviser will then help them prepare a whole farm recovery plan which will help farmers to develop new income opportunities and access the range of other support measures available to them. Advice is also provided on re-stocking.

The Government's long-term strategy for the future of the agriculture industry aims to facilitate the development of a sustainable, competitive and diverse farming and food sector within a thriving rural economy that advances environmental, health and animal welfare goals. The independent Policy Commission announced on 9 August will look at the future of food and farming and advise us on how to achieve this.

All this is in addition to the £1 billion paid out to farmers in compensation for animals slaughtered due to foot and mouth disease.

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much compensation has been paid to date to people affected by foot and mouth disease in south Lancashire. [6207]

**Mr. Morley:** From the information available on 27 September, the provisional amount paid in compensation for livestock slaughtered due to foot and mouth disease to producers in Lancashire is £39,763,091. A figure for south Lancashire could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Adam Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many farmers have yet to receive compensation for the slaughter of their animals resulting from the foot and mouth disease crisis in *(a)* the UK and *(b)* Wales. [6408]

**Mr. Morley:** As at 4 October 2001 the number of farmers awaiting compensation was; *(a)* 430 in the UK, including *(b)* 53 in Wales.

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many of Britain's abattoirs she estimates will close due to the foot and mouth crisis. [6247]

**Mr. Morley:** The number of abattoirs has been in decline for a considerable number of years. It is recognised that abattoirs have experienced much disruption during the foot and mouth disease outbreak. However, identifying the impact of foot and mouth disease would be extremely difficult, especially before the outbreak has run its course.

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what criteria she will use in deciding when the foot and mouth outbreak is over. [6249]

**Mr. Morley:** The OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) sets out the criteria for regaining disease-free status. To regain our disease-free status (without vaccination), we must be able to declare that there have been no outbreaks of disease for three months; that no vaccination has been carried out for at least 12 months; that we have not imported vaccinated animals; that all regulatory measures for the prevention and control of foot and mouth disease have been implemented and that we have documented evidence of an effective system of surveillance in operation.

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what audit procedures are undertaken on authorised contractors to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are retained on contracts to cleanse and disinfect foot and mouth affected premises. [6084]

**Mr. Morley:** Authorised contractors to DEFRA retained on contracts to cleanse and disinfect foot and mouth affected premises have their services and charges subjected to audit and review by clerks of works, quantity surveyors and forensic accountants engaged by DEFRA.

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she has taken to ensure that British agriculture is protected in case of a resurgence of foot and mouth disease. [6487]

**Mr. Morley:** Once foot and mouth disease has been eradicated, we will continue to be vigilant, in order to prevent a recurrence of the disease.

Imports of meat and meat products into the United Kingdom, as into other member states of the European Union, take place within the framework of European law. The UK imports livestock under EU or national rules only from countries or areas officially recognised as being free from foot and mouth disease.

The control of meat and meat product imports into this country involves the inspection of commercial imports at border inspection posts, controls on personal imports and

action in shops and other food premises against sales of illegally imported food. The Government are taking action in all of these contexts to build on existing controls.

Where farms have been culled due to foot and mouth disease, certain rules apply before restocking can take place to minimise the risk of recurrence of the disease. Alternatively, if the farmer does not wish to restock at once, restrictions are lifted four months after the full and final C and D, subject to a final inspection. If it has not been possible to complete a full C and D to DEFRA's satisfaction, 12 months must elapse after the preliminary C and D before restocking can take place.

Biosecurity measures are also vital in helping to prevent the spread and resurgence of foot and mouth disease. As part of the ongoing campaign to provide timely and accurate information and advice to all concerned we have mailed biosecurity guidelines, leaflets and letters and placed adverts in local, national and specialist publications. In addition, local veterinary inspectors have contacted their clients to discuss biosecurity and other aspects of the disease.

The Department has contingency plans to deal with all notifiable exotic animal diseases, including foot and mouth disease. These are regularly updated and tested by the state veterinary service.

The Government in addition have announced two independent inquiries to look into the lessons to be learned from the current outbreak of foot and mouth, and a public commission to examine how the Government can create a sustainable, competitive and diverse farming and food sector which contributes to a thriving rural economy while at the same time advances environmental, economic health and animal welfare goals. We want to learn the lessons for the future, quickly and without great expense.

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 July 2001 (4135), *Official Report* column 396W, what is the nature of the help being offered by Advantage West Midlands to businesses in Worcestershire affected by the foot and mouth restrictions. [6630]

**Alun Michael:** Advantage West Midlands has worked with partners to tackle the economic impact of foot and mouth disease through a range of measures including: advice to businesses via Business Link and £4 million Rural Recovery Fund targeted at small businesses in Staffordshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. As a result, 57 of the businesses helped have been in Worcestershire. Advice to visitors through a promotional campaign developed by the Heart of England Tourist Board, with a marketing campaign around the May bank holidays. A tourism marketing recovery programme of around £800,000 with a balance of regional and local activity including £70,000 given to a Worcestershire programme.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of the number of officials her Department needs to manage the foot and mouth outbreak. [6626]

**Mr. Morley:** The number of officials engaged in the management and control of the foot and mouth outbreak has varied widely according to the state of the disease. At the height there were about 6,000 officials directly involved with the management and control of the disease. This figure has now reduced significantly, but staff can quickly be recalled in the event of an escalation of the disease.

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many businesses have received financial assistance through grants offered to businesses affected by foot and mouth disease; and how much the budget is for such grants in the South West of England. [6473]

**Alun Michael:** Some 3,500 businesses in England have so far received a grant. The budget for such grants in the south-west is £9.2 million.

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on what date guidance was sent to Forest of Dean district council concerning grants and assistance to tourism businesses affected by foot and mouth disease. [6464]

**Alun Michael:** Business Link Gloucestershire provided the Forest of Dean district council with an outline of the scheme in May. It was agreed that the Business Link would work in partnership with the Forest of Dean district council to promote awareness of grant funding, and at the beginning of June the businesses who had contacted FDCC to seek assistance were sent details of the scheme.

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when it is expected that businesses in the Forest of Dean, which have met the criteria for obtaining grants to assist them after foot and mouth disease, will receive the money. [6465]

**Alun Michael:** The timing of receipt of money depends on the speed at which the business, which is being grant aided, can complete the relevant action. Thirty-six businesses have already been grant aided to a total of £342,000, and 26 businesses are still in discussions with advisers.

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the criteria are for obtaining a grant for a business affected by foot and mouth disease; who set the criteria; and on what advice. [6466]

**Alun Michael:** The criteria were set by the then Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) in consultation with other Government Departments, to the effect that the business had been substantially adversely affected, had taken all reasonable steps to reduce costs, could present evidence of sound trading immediately before the outbreak, and could demonstrate that it was likely to be able to return to profit within 12 months. Help was available only to small businesses (fewer than 50 employees) and to a maximum of £15,000.

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many businesses in *(a)* Gloucestershire and *(b)* Herefordshire have received financial assistance through grants offered to businesses affected by foot and mouth disease. [6467]

**Alun Michael:** One hundred and six businesses in Gloucestershire had received approval for grant funding as at 20 September. Ninety seven businesses in Herefordshire had received approval for grant funding as at 30 September.

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when information and guidance was issued to Gloucestershire Business Link about grants and assistance to businesses affected by foot and mouth disease. [6469]

**Alun Michael:** Business Link Gloucestershire received formal notification via a contract dated 31 May (which they received on 4 June).

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much has been awarded to Business Link Gloucestershire for grants to offer assistance to businesses affected by foot and mouth disease. [6470]

**Alun Michael:** £2.421 million has been allocated to Business Link Gloucestershire for business support.

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the average length of time is between application and award by *(a)* Gloucestershire Business Link and *(b)* Herefordshire Business Links in respect of grants to assist businesses affected by foot and mouth disease. [6488]

**Alun Michael:** Care has been taken to allow decisions on applications for help under this scheme to be dealt with in a way which meets the needs of each region and the local needs within each region, which is why we have depended on the local expertise of Business Links.

The different administrative systems adopted by the two agencies do not allow a straightforward comparison of this sort to be made.

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans the Government have to increase awareness among rural businesses of the financial aid available due to the foot and mouth outbreak. [6668]

**Alun Michael:** The Government have been actively raising awareness among affected businesses of the financial aid available to help cope with the impact of foot and mouth disease. The Small Business Service has sent out 3.7 million copies of their leaflet "Coping with Foot and Mouth—help for business" via banks, post offices, trade associations, employer organisations, etc. Business advice fact sheets have been posted on DEFRA's website, http://www.defra.gov.uk/ and we have set up help lines. The regional development agencies have also been actively promoting the business recovery fund.

Preliminary results from research by Prism Consulting for the Department in September reveals that 40 per cent. of businesses had sought assistance from an outside organisation—be that central or local government, or through the regional development agencies, etc.—which is an improvement on earlier results. We continue to look at the most effective means to engage the rural business community in order to make sure that assistance gets to those businesses with the most pressing need.

**Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will introduce a UK national top-up to the sheep annual premium scheme to offset the reduction in premiums arising from the effect of the foot and mouth outbreaks. [7444]

**Mr. Morley:** Rates of sheep annual premium are determined each year by the European Commission and are based on the difference between the EU basic price for sheepmeat and the annual average price for sheepmeat on the EU market. There is no provision in the EU sheepmeat regime for national top-ups of the EU rate.

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if the import into Britain of livestock products is allowed from countries in which foot and mouth is endemic. [7763]

**Mr. Morley:** European Community legislation does permit the importation of meat and meat products from certain countries where foot and mouth disease is endemic but only where the disease is restricted to specific areas. Imports are only permitted from parts of the country that are free of disease or under conditions that ensure the meat does not represent any health risk. These provisions are in line with the guidelines set out in the Office International des Epizooties International Animal Health Code 2001.

All meat and meat products imported from third countries must be accompanied by veterinary certification, which includes confirmation that the meat is derived from animals which have been subjected to an ante-mortem inspection during the 24 hours prior to slaughter in order to confirm, among other things, that the animal shows no signs of foot and mouth disease.

All meat and meat products imported into the UK from third countries must enter at designated UK border inspection posts (BIPs) where they are subject to veterinary inspections. All consignments are subject to documentary and identity checks and at least 20 per cent. of consignments undergo physical checks. These ensure import conditions are met and that the products remain in a satisfactory condition.

## Landfill Tax

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment her Department has made of the landfill tax receipts to be collected in each of the next five years. [5471]

**Mr. Boateng:** Forecast tax receipts for the following year are published each March in the Financial Statement and Budget Report (FSBR) for all indirect and direct taxes. By convention, forecasts of tax receipts in later years are not published separately; they are, however, implicit within the projections of total receipts provided in the FSBR.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 16 October 2001*

## PRIME MINISTER

### Intelligence and Security Committee

**Mr. Bryant:** To ask the Prime Minister what the composition is of the Intelligence and Security Committee. [8271]

**The Prime Minister:** Following appropriate consultation and in accordance with section 10 of the Intelligence and Security Act 1994 I have appointed the following members to the Intelligence and Security Committee:

The right hon. Ann Taylor MP (Chair)
Kevin Barron MP
The right hon. Alan Howarth MP CBE
The right hon. Gavin Strang MP
The right hon. Joyce Quin MP
The right hon. Lord Archer of Sandwell QC
The right hon. James Arbuthnot MP
Michael Mates MP
The right hon. Alan Beith MP.

Copies of letters announcing these appointments were placed in the Library of the House on 30 July 2001.

## HEALTH

### Public-private Partnerships

3. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings he has had with trade unions since 7 June to discuss public/private partnerships in the NHS. [3765]

**Mr. Milburn:** I have met with trade unions on a number of occasions to discuss a range of issues including public/private partnerships.

36. **Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the availability of public capital for hospital building programmes. [3799]

**Mr. Hutton:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the availability of public capital for the National Health Service. This matter will be discussed again at the Public Expenditure Ministerial Cabinet Committee as part of the current spending review process.

Public capital will be considered for major hospital building projects when it is proven through the business case process to provide better value for money than a private finance initiative solution.

### Cervical Cancer Screening

14. **Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on cervical cancer screening in the NHS. [3777]

**Ms Blears:** In the year to March 2000, 3.6 million women were screened and laboratories examined 4.1 million smears. Research has shown that the incidence of cervical cancer fell by 43 per cent. between 1988 and 1997.

### Health and Social Care Act

15. **Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the provisions of section 49(2) of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 will be implemented; and if he will make a statement. [3778]

**Jacqui Smith:** In line with our pledge in the NHS Plan, section 49(2) of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 came into effect for those paying for their own care by a registered nurse on 1 October 2001. For those who are already state-funded, the provisions will come into effect on 1 April 2003 .

### NHS/Private Sector Concordats

16. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to review the concordats between the NHS and the private sector. [3779]

**Mr. Hutton:** My officials are surveying health authorities and trusts on the extent and cost of the acute activity they commission from the private sector, and discussing experience to date with private sector providers and the NHS. The Centre for Health Economics at York University is also conducting a review of activity and experience.

### Beta Interferon

17. **Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the NICE report on the availability of beta interferon for MS sufferers. [3780]

**Mr. Hutton:** The National Institute for Clinical Excellence's Appraisal Committee is carefully considering the extensive comments on the Provisional Appraisal Determination. NICE expects to issue its guidance by December 2001.

31. **Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the clinical benefits of beta interferon for MS sufferers. [3794]

**Mr. Hutton:** In view of the uncertainty over the appropriate use of beta interferon, we asked the National Institute for Clinical Excellence to conduct an authoritative appraisal on the evidence of beta interferon and glatiramer acetate. NICE expects to issue its guidance by December 2001.

### Health and Social Care

18. **Mr. Bailey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his plans are for improving co-operation between health and social care. [3781]

21. **Andy King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve co-operation between health and social care. [3784]

**Jacqui Smith:** Improved co-operation is being encouraged through the Health Act 1999 flexibilities—pooled funds, lead commissioning and integrated provision, especially in intermediate care, community equipment and nursing care. Care trusts can now be formed as single organisations, commissioning and providing both health and social care. Fifteen care trust demonstrator sites are preparing to go live from April 2002 to April 2003, receiving financial support for the preparatory period from the money recently announced to reduce bed blocking. Co-operation on the use of this money will be supported by the capacity planning being carried out by the local health and social care economy.

### Diagnostic Testing

19. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for increasing the use of diagnostic testing in health care. [3782]

**Ms Blears:** Diagnostic services are key in meeting NHS Plan targets. Central procurement programmes for CT and MRI scanners are already delivering improvements in the diagnostic quality of images, supporting the work of clinicians and benefiting patients. Over the last two years we have invested £20 million in supporting innovative pathology modernisation projects and a further £8 million is being made available this year.

### Cloning

20. **Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to introduce legislation to ban the cloning of human beings; and if he will make a statement. [3783]

**Ms Blears:** Human reproductive cloning cannot and will not be carried out in the United Kingdom. Treatment using human embryos requires a licence from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which has stated that it would not issue a licence for reproductive cloning. Anybody carrying out such treatment without a licence would be guilty of a criminal offence. We will introduce primary legislation to put this ban on a statutory footing as soon as parliamentary time allows.

### Osteoporosis

22. **Linda Gilroy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support his Department is giving for services to help people with osteoporosis. [3785]

**Jacqui Smith:** There are well established clinical procedures in the NHS for dealing with osteoporosis. We have included specific targets for the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis in the National Standards Framework for Older People. We are also examining how osteoporosis can be included in our pre-retirement health check pilots.

### NHS Staff (Child Care)

23. **Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken to improve child care for NHS staff. [3786]

**Mr. Hutton:** The NHS Childcare Strategy centres on providing good quality accessible and affordable child care. We are already making available funding of over £70 million for the provision of 150 additional on-site nurseries by 2004, creating around 7,500 further nursery places. We have also pledged a further £100 million to develop alternative forms of child care.

### Health Authorities (Lancashire)

24. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the merger of health authorities in Lancashire. [3787]

**Jacqui Smith:** Public consultation is already under way on the proposal to create a new, strategic health authority (StHA) serving Lancashire and Cumbria. Consultation is taking place concurrently on the 27 other proposed StHAs in England, ending on 30 November 2001. Ministers will then decide on boundaries.

### Bed Blocking

25. **Mr. Salter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress in tackling bed blocking in the health service. [3788]

**Jacqui Smith:** The proportion of people over 75 whose discharge from hospital was delayed fell to 11.1 per cent. in June 2001 compared with 12.1 per cent. in the same quarter in 2000. We are also investing an additional £300 million over this year and the next as part of a radical 'cash for change' programme designed to end widespread 'bed blocking' by 2004. £100 million will be available for the remainder of this financial year to April 2002 with £200 million available for 2002–03.

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the amount of NHS hospital beds subject to bed blocking, broken down by each hospital trust in England and Wales, shown in actual terms and as a percentage of beds in use. [7618]

**Jacqui Smith** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The proportion of people over 75 whose discharge from hospital was delayed fell to 11.1 per cent. in June 2001 compared with 12.1 per cent. in the same quarter in 2000. We are also investing an additional £300 million over this year and the next as part of a radical 'cash for change' programme designed to end widespread 'bed blocking' by 2004. £100 million will be available for the remainder of this financial year to April 2002 with £200 million available for 2002–03.

### NHS Dental Practices

26. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS dental practices there are in Pendle and Burnley; and how many are accepting new NHS patients. [3789]

**Jacqui Smith:** There are 16 national health service dental practices in Pendle, three of which are currently accepting all categories of NHS patients; another (one) practice is accepting children only. Burnley has 12 NHS practices, one of which is accepting NHS patients for dentures only.

37. **Miss Begg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ensure that NHS dentistry is accessible in all areas. [3800]

**Ms Blears:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for the provision of dental services in England. Provision of services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the devolved bodies.

In September 1999, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister promised that within two years everyone will be able to access national health service dentistry if and when they want it via NHS Direct. All health authorities in England now have in place dentistry action plans to ensure that everyone in their local area can access NHS dentistry if they want it within a reasonable time and distance. The plans identify shortfalls in service provision and ways of tackling unmet demand.

We have invested over £100 million of additional funding in NHS dentistry in the last two years. Dental access centres offering a complete range of services to unregistered patients, are operating from over 100 sites and more are being developed. Funding has been made available to general dental practitioners to encourage them to treat more NHS patients. In addition regulations have been introduced allowing health authorities to use their own resources to access NHS dentistry tailored to the needs of their local communities.

Information for patients on NHS dentistry via NHS Direct has been available nationally since the end of September. Callers seeking access to NHS dentistry will from now on be provided with information about the availability of NHS dental services within a reasonable distance of their homes.

38. **Lawrie Quinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the availability of NHS dentists in the rural districts of North Yorkshire. [3801]

**Jacqui Smith:** Currently there is one dentist in Scarborough Town and another some three miles away in East Ayton accepting new National Health Service patients. There are also dentists in Whitby and Kirkbymoorside accepting new NHS patients. Additional resources have been allocated to a general dental practice in Scarborough to enable it to treat more unregistered NHS patients. The health authority has set up dental access centres in Scarborough, Whitby and York. The demand for these services is high and the health authority is considering expanding these dental access centres.

### Health Inequalities

27. **Fiona Mactaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to tackle health inequalities; and if he will make a statement. [3790]

**Ms Blears:** In the NHS Plan we made a commitment to set national targets for reducing unacceptable inequalities in health which consistently widened under the last Government. In February of this year two new national targets for reducing health inequalities in infant mortality and life expectancy were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and at present we are consulting widely on the actions necessary to deliver them. Copies of the consultation document, "Tackling Health Inequalities", are available in the Library.

### NHS University

28. **Ms Dari Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress with the establishment of a university of the NHS. [3791]

**Mr. Hutton:** The NHS Plan included a commitment to establish an NHS University for all NHS staff. The recruitment process for a Chief Executive and project team to establish the NHS University has begun. A launch document, which gives more information about the vision for the University, has been published and will be widely circulated within the NHS, and within the academic community.

### Cancer Services

29. **Gillian Merron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve cancer services. [3792]

34. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve cancer services. [3797]

**Ms Blears:** By 2003–04 an additional £570 million will have been invested in cancer care. This money will support the appointment of new consultants; implementation of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance to end the postcode lottery of care; cutting waiting times for cancer and increasing National Health Service investment in specialist palliative care services.

### Primary Care Trusts

30. **Mr. Pound:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress in the creation of Primary Care Trusts. [3793]

**Mr. Hutton:** One hundred and sixty four Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) are already operational. There are around 150 applications from the remaining Primary Care Groups to become PCTs in April 2002, making PCTs the lead national health service organisations in assessing, planning and securing all health services and improving health.

### Radiotherapy Equipment

32. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase the availability of radiotherapy equipment. [3795]

**Ms Blears:** Investment through the New Opportunities Fund and the NHS Plan will provide 102 linear accelerators for treating cancer. In addition, funding has been made available for radiotherapy treatment planning computers and simulation equipment to support these.

Twenty-eight linear accelerators have been delivered and are expected to be treating patients by the end of the year. By 2004 all of the radiotherapy equipment will be in place.

In addition, 86 MRI scanners and 186 CT scanners will be installed to help in the diagnosis of cancer.

### Osteopaths

33. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many treatments have been provided by osteopaths on the NHS in each year since 1992. [3796]

**Ms Blears:** Information about the number of osteopathic treatments provided on the national health service is not collected centrally.

### General Practitioners

35. **Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he plans to publish a new contract for general practitioners. [3798]

**Mr. Hutton:** We are committed to introducing a new quality-based contract by 2004 and have asked the National Health Service Confederation to negotiate this with the profession. The British Medical Association has indicated that it shares our aim and would like to see earlier implementation. Positive and constructive negotiations will facilitate this.

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the requirement for general practitioners in Huntingdon to take account of anticipated house building in the area until 2011. [6172]

**Ms Blears:** In response to the anticipated population growth over the next few years Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust opened a new general practitioner practice in Huntingdon in March of this year. There are currently two GPs in the practice but the building has the capacity to accommodate four GPs. The PCT has planned that this additional capacity will address any increased demand on primary services until 2006.

The development of primary care in Huntingdon beyond 2006 will depend on the outcome of the current study commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council into the urban planning for Cambridge and its surrounding market towns.

### Staff Retention

39. **Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve the retention of staff working in the professions allied to medicine. [3802]

**Mr. Hutton:** "Meeting the Challenge" sets out our plans for developing and supporting Allied Health Professions and the central role they have to play in delivering the NHS Plan's key priorities. The NHS Plan also introduced the Improving Working Lives Standard to ensure that NHS employers create well-managed, flexible working environments that support all NHS staff.

### Coppice Family Doctor Practice

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will authorise the Coppice family doctor practice in Rustington, West Sussex to replace a full-time partner with two part-time doctors. [6760]

**Ms Blears:** It is not for Ministers to authorise the appointment of general practitioners. The decision is for the Medical Practices Committee (MPC), an independent, non-departmental statutory body. When a vacancy occurs in general practice it is the responsibility of the partners to fill the vacancy with a GP with the most appropriate skills to serve the local population. An application to the MPC has already been refused, but I understand that the submission of a further application is now being considered.

### Vaccinations

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what clinical grounds parents seeking separate vaccinations for their children are being advised to give rubella vaccination first. [7212]

**Jacqui Smith** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The information requested is not available centrally in the format requested.

The Department, acting on the advice of its independent expert advisory committees and on the overwhelming view of experts from around the world, does not recommend or endorse the use of separate measles, mumps and rubella vaccines instead of MMR. The Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Pharmaceutical Officer wrote to all doctors on 9 March 2001 reiterating their advice that

"Children should not be given separate measles, mumps and rubella vaccines in place of MMR, since there is no evidence of benefit and a clear risk of harm from such a practice".

We are not aware of any medical condition that would make the use of separate vaccines preferable to the use of MMR.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in each of the last five years were given separate vaccinations for measles, mumps and rubella. [7213]

**Jacqui Smith** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The information requested is not available centrally.

### Transplant Units

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) by what date changes to the network of transplant units will be implemented; [7221]

(2) what period of consultation will be allowed following the publication of proposals for the future of transplant units in Wythenshawe, Sheffield and Birmingham; [7222]

(3) when he will publish his proposals for the future of transplant units in Wythenshawe, Sheffield and Birmingham. [7223]

**Mr. Hutton** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The discussion document on the National Heart and Lung Transplant Service was published on Friday 21 September 2001. The Department of Health will receive comments until 7 December 2001.

Our proposals for new national standards are set out in the discussion document National Adult Heat and Lung Transplant Service and will be reviewed in the light of the comments received.

We have already made it clear that the transplant units at Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham will remain open.

## Retirements (NHS)

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of staff working in the NHS are due to retire in the next *(a)* five years, *(b)* 10 years and *(c)* 15 years. [8030]

**Mr. Hutton:** Information on the number of staff due to retire from the national health service is not collected centrally.

## Children in Care

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many young persons are in care and how many of those are *(a)* fostered and *(b)* otherwise cared for separately from their natural parents in each social services authority in England; and what percentage of the total under-18 population this represents. [7503]

**Jacqui Smith:** Information on the number of children looked after in each social services authority by type and placement at 31 March 2000 (latest available date) is given in the table.

*Number of children looked after by local councils in England at 31 March 2000, by placement*

*Number and rates per 10,000 children aged under-18*

| | Number | | | | Rate per 10,000 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *All children*[1] | *Foster placements* | *Placed with parents or relative* | *Other placements* | *All children* | *Foster placements* | *Placed with parents or relative* | *Other placements* |
| England | 58,100 | 37,900 | 6,500 | 13,700 | 51 | 34 | 6 | 12 |
| *North East* | | | | | | | | |
| *Shire counties* | | | | | | | | |
| Durham | 525 | 345 | 55 | 125 | 47 | 31 | 5 | 11 |
| Northumberland | 300 | 175 | 60 | 65 | 44 | 26 | 9 | 10 |
| *Unitary authorities* | | | | | | | | |
| Darlington | 115 | 75 | 15 | 30 | 51 | 32 | 6 | 13 |
| Hartlepool | 115 | 65 | 35 | 15 | 52 | 29 | 16 | 7 |
| Middlesbrough | 185 | 135 | 20 | 30 | 51 | 36 | 6 | 9 |
| Redcar and Cleveland | 165 | 115 | 10 | 35 | 50 | 36 | 3 | 11 |
| Stockton on Tees | 205 | 125 | 35 | 45 | 46 | 28 | 7 | 10 |
| *Metropolitan districts* | | | | | | | | |
| Gateshead | 260 | 160 | 30 | 70 | 60 | 37 | 7 | 16 |
| Newcastle Upon Tyne | 445 | 305 | 45 | 95 | 76 | 51 | 8 | 16 |
| North Tyneside | 280 | 185 | 30 | 65 | 67 | 44 | 8 | 15 |
| South Tyneside | 295 | 180 | 30 | 80 | 82 | 51 | 9 | 23 |
| Sunderland | 465 | 300 | 40 | 125 | 68 | 44 | 6 | 18 |
| *North West* | | | | | | | | |
| *Shire counties* | | | | | | | | |
| Cheshire | 475 | 350 | 40 | 90 | 32 | 23 | 3 | 6 |
| Cumbria | 515 | 325 | 100 | 90 | 49 | 31 | 10 | 9 |
| Lancashire | 1,445 | 780 | 265 | 405 | 55 | 30 | 10 | 15 |
| *Unitary authorities* | | | | | | | | |
| Blackburn and Darwen | 275 | 160 | 45 | 75 | 72 | 42 | 11 | 19 |
| Blackpool | 285 | 175 | 25 | 80 | 92 | 57 | 8 | 26 |
| Halton | 175 | 135 | 15 | 25 | 56 | 43 | 5 | 8 |
| Warrington | 165 | 120 | 15 | 30 | 38 | 27 | 3 | 7 |
| *Metropolitan districts* | | | | | | | | |
| Bolton | 315 | 185 | 55 | 75 | 49 | 28 | 9 | 12 |
| Bury | 195 | 130 | 25 | 45 | 46 | 30 | 6 | 10 |
| Manchester | 1,235 | 815 | 195 | 225 | 110 | 72 | 18 | 20 |
| Oldham | 300 | 190 | 30 | 80 | 54 | 34 | 6 | 14 |
| Rochdale | 255 | 155 | 40 | 60 | 48 | 30 | 7 | 12 |
| Salford | 570 | 345 | 80 | 145 | 108 | 66 | 16 | 27 |
| Stockport | 350 | 210 | 50 | 90 | 54 | 32 | 8 | 14 |
| Tameside | 265 | 170 | 45 | 45 | 50 | 33 | 9 | 9 |
| Trafford | 150 | 90 | 15 | 45 | 30 | 18 | 3 | 9 |
| Wigan | 465 | 305 | 85 | 80 | 66 | 43 | 12 | 11 |
| *Merseyside* | | | | | | | | |
| *Metropolitan districts* | | | | | | | | |
| Knowsley | 250 | 165 | 35 | 45 | 61 | 41 | 9 | 11 |
| Liverpool | 1,215 | 715 | 170 | 330 | 112 | 66 | 16 | 31 |
| Sefton | 300 | 195 | 30 | 80 | 47 | 31 | 4 | 12 |
| St. Helens | 270 | 140 | 40 | 95 | 67 | 34 | 9 | 23 |
| Wirral | 395 | 265 | 60 | 70 | 52 | 35 | 8 | 9 |
| *Yorkshire and Humberside* | | | | | | | | |
| *Shire counties* | | | | | | | | |
| North Yorkshire | 340 | 235 | 45 | 60 | 28 | 19 | 4 | 5 |
| *Unitary authorities* | | | | | | | | |
| East Riding of Yorkshire | 240 | 150 | 35 | 55 | 36 | 22 | 5 | 8 |
| Kingston Upon Hull | 645 | 410 | 90 | 145 | 101 | 64 | 14 | 23 |
| North East Lincolnshire | 275 | 180 | 35 | 55 | 72 | 48 | 9 | 15 |

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*Number of children looked after by local councils in England at 31 March 2000, by placement*

*Number and rates per 10,000 children aged under-18*

| | Number | | | | Rate per 10,000 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *All children*[1] | *Foster placements* | *Placed with parents or relative* | *Other placements* | *All children* | *Foster placements* | *Placed with parents or relative* | *Other placements* |
| North Lincolnshire | 190 | 110 | 40 | 40 | 55 | 32 | 11 | 12 |
| York | 140 | 80 | 15 | 45 | 38 | 21 | 4 | 13 |
| *Metropolitan districts* | | | | | | | | |
| Barnsley | 335 | 190 | 60 | 85 | 65 | 37 | 12 | 16 |
| Bradford | 685 | 410 | 95 | 180 | 54 | 33 | 7 | 14 |
| Calderdale | 220 | 135 | 25 | 55 | 48 | 30 | 6 | 13 |
| Doncaster | 435 | 245 | 75 | 115 | 63 | 36 | 11 | 17 |
| Kirklees | 330 | 155 | 75 | 100 | 35 | 16 | 8 | 11 |
| Leeds | 1,275 | 835 | 155 | 280 | 79 | 52 | 10 | 17 |
| Rotherham | 370 | 235 | 60 | 75 | 62 | 40 | 10 | 13 |
| Sheffield | 695 | 410 | 120 | 165 | 61 | 36 | 11 | 15 |
| Wakefield | 455 | 350 | 40 | 60 | 61 | 48 | 6 | 8 |
| *East Midlands* | | | | | | | | |
| *Shire counties* | | | | | | | | |
| Derbyshire | 645 | 515 | 25 | 105 | 40 | 32 | 1 | 7 |
| Leicestershire | 275 | 200 | 30 | 45 | 20 | 15 | 2 | 3 |
| Lincolnshire | 520 | 295 | 80 | 140 | 39 | 22 | 6 | 11 |
| Northamptonshire | 610 | 375 | 55 | 180 | 41 | 25 | 4 | 12 |
| Nottinghamshire | 530 | 365 | 40 | 120 | 32 | 22 | 3 | 7 |
| *Unitary authorities* | | | | | | | | |
| Derby | 445 | 315 | 35 | 90 | 81 | 57 | 7 | 17 |
| Leicester | 465 | 310 | 50 | 105 | 63 | 42 | 6 | 14 |
| Nottingham | 605 | 385 | 70 | 150 | 89 | 57 | 10 | 22 |
| Rutland | 10 | 5 | [2]— | 5 | 10 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| *West Midlands* | | | | | | | | |
| *Shire Counties* | | | | | | | | |
| Shropshire | 190 | 130 | 5 | 55 | 31 | 22 | 1 | 9 |
| Staffordshire | 570 | 375 | 70 | 125 | 321 | 21 | 4 | 7 |
| Warwickshire | 350 | 260 | 35 | 55 | 31 | 23 | 3 | 5 |
| Worcestershire | 640 | 440 | 90 | 110 | 54 | 37 | 8 | 9 |
| *Unitary authorities* | | | | | | | | |
| Herefordshire | 195 | 145 | 20 | 35 | 53 | 38 | 5 | 9 |
| Stoke on Trent | 345 | 230 | 40 | 70 | 60 | 40 | 7 | 13 |
| Telford and Wrekin | 155 | 95 | 10 | 55 | 41 | 25 | 3 | 14 |
| *Metropolitan districts* | | | | | | | | |
| Birmingham | 1,760 | 1,030 | 200 | 525 | 67 | 39 | 8 | 20 |
| Coventry | 490 | 290 | 75 | 125 | 66 | 39 | 10 | 17 |
| Dudley | 380 | 240 | 80 | 65 | 55 | 35 | 11 | 9 |
| Sandwell | 440 | 315 | 70 | 55 | 62 | 45 | 10 | 8 |
| Solihull | 180 | 120 | 20 | 40 | 38 | 26 | 4 | 8 |
| Walsall | 365 | 230 | 35 | 100 | 59 | 37 | 6 | 16 |
| Wolverhampton | 380 | 250 | 60 | 70 | 65 | 43 | 10 | 12 |
| *South West* | | | | | | | | |
| *Shire Counties* | | | | | | | | |
| Cornwall | 565 | 400 | 60 | 105 | 54 | 38 | 6 | 10 |
| Devon | 700 | 490 | 55 | 155 | 48 | 34 | 4 | 11 |
| Dorset | 270 | 215 | 10 | 45 | 34 | 27 | 1 | 6 |
| Gloucestershire | 505 | 370 | 65 | 75 | 40 | 29 | 5 | 6 |
| Isles of Scilly | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Somerset | 335 | 230 | 10 | 95 | 30 | 21 | 1 | 9 |
| Wiltshire | 260 | 195 | 30 | 35 | 26 | 20 | 3 | 3 |
| *Unitary authorities* | | | | | | | | |
| Somerset | 145 | 130 | 5 | 15 | 43 | 38 | 1 | 4 |
| Bournemouth | 205 | 160 | 5 | 35 | 67 | 53 | 2 | 12 |
| Bristol | 555 | 395 | 45 | 115 | 63 | 45 | 5 | 13 |
| North Somerset | 150 | 110 | 20 | 20 | 38 | 27 | 5 | 6 |
| Plymouth | 405 | 315 | 25 | 65 | 72 | 56 | 5 | 12 |
| Poole | 145 | 110 | 10 | 25 | 48 | 37 | 3 | 8 |
| South Gloucestershire | 140 | 105 | 10 | 20 | 25 | 19 | 2 | 4 |
| Swindon | 180 | 140 | 15 | 20 | 42 | 33 | 4 | 5 |
| Torbay | 215 | 150 | 30 | 35 | 85 | 59 | 13 | 13 |
| *Eastern* | | | | | | | | |
| *Shire counties* | | | | | | | | |
| Bedfordshire | 355 | 200 | 60 | 100 | 41 | 23 | 7 | 11 |
| Cambridgeshire | 395 | 285 | 40 | 75 | 32 | 23 | 3 | 6 |
| Essex | 1,205 | 735 | 125 | 350 | 42 | 25 | 4 | 12 |
| Hertfordshire | 810 | 590 | 55 | 170 | 34 | 24 | 2 | 7 |
| Norfolk | 680 | 490 | 35 | 155 | 41 | 30 | 2 | 9 |
| Suffolk | 535 | 355 | 75 | 100 | 35 | 23 | 5 | 7 |

*Number of children looked after by local councils in England at 31 March 2000, by placement*

*Number and rates per 10,000 children aged under-18*

| | Number | | | | Rate per 10,000 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *All children*[1] | *Foster placements* | *Placed with parents or relative* | *Other placements* | *All children* | *Foster placements* | *Placed with parents or relative* | *Other placements* |
| *Unitary authorities* | | | | | | | | |
| Luton | 305 | 220 | 40 | 50 | 62 | 44 | 8 | 10 |
| Peterborough | 390 | 270 | 55 | 65 | 101 | 70 | 14 | 17 |
| Southend | 250 | 195 | 20 | 35 | 66 | 51 | 6 | 10 |
| Thurrock | 185 | 130 | 10 | 45 | 56 | 39 | 3 | 13 |
| *London* | | | | | | | | |
| *Inner London* | | | | | | | | |
| Camden | 330 | 210 | 10 | 105 | 88 | 56 | 3 | 29 |
| City of London | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 72 | 72 | 0 | 0 |
| Greenwich | 465 | 315 | 40 | 110 | 86 | 58 | 8 | 21 |
| Hackney | 490 | 355 | 30 | 105 | 95 | 69 | 5 | 21 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 365 | 255 | 20 | 90 | 119 | 83 | 7 | 29 |
| Islington | 545 | 315 | 15 | 215 | 143 | 83 | 4 | 56 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 215 | 135 | 10 | 70 | 68 | 43 | 3 | 23 |
| Lambeth | 735 | 420 | 25 | 285 | 117 | 67 | 4 | 45 |
| Lewisham | 495 | 320 | 35 | 135 | 84 | 54 | 6 | 23 |
| Southwark | 600 | 435 | 30 | 135 | 104 | 75 | 5 | 24 |
| Tower Hamlets | 280 | [3]— | [3]— | [3]— | 54 | [3]— | [3]— | [3]— |
| Wandsworth | 345 | 250 | 25 | 65 | 70 | 51 | 5 | 14 |
| Westminster | 290 | 180 | 30 | 80 | 76 | 47 | 7 | 21 |
| *Outer London* | | | | | | | | |
| Barking and Dagenham | 235 | 165 | 10 | 65 | 58 | 40 | 2 | 16 |
| Barnet | 265 | 195 | 15 | 55 | 35 | 26 | 2 | 8 |
| Bexley | 200 | 150 | 10 | 40 | 39 | 29 | 2 | 8 |
| Brent | 295 | 200 | 30 | 65 | 49 | 33 | 5 | 11 |
| Bromley | 250 | 155 | 30 | 65 | 40 | 24 | 5 | 11 |
| Croydon | 395 | 255 | 50 | 95 | 50 | 32 | 6 | 12 |
| Ealing | 430 | 230 | 40 | 160 | 62 | 33 | 6 | 23 |
| Enfield | 250 | 170 | 10 | 75 | 40 | 27 | 1 | 11 |
| Haringey | 435 | 260 | 10 | 165 | 85 | 51 | 2 | 32 |
| Harrow | 175 | 120 | 15 | 40 | 36 | 24 | 3 | 8 |
| Havering | 165 | 115 | 10 | 40 | 33 | 23 | 2 | 8 |
| Hillingdon | 385 | 245 | 15 | 120 | 67 | 43 | 3 | 21 |
| Hounslow | 255 | 160 | 30 | 70 | 52 | 32 | 6 | 14 |
| Kingston Upon Thames | 105 | 55 | 5 | 50 | 34 | 17 | 2 | 15 |
| Merton | 185 | 130 | 20 | 35 | 46 | 31 | 5 | 9 |
| Newham | 485 | 375 | 30 | 80 | 68 | 52 | 4 | 11 |
| Redbridge | 145 | 85 | 15 | 45 | 26 | 16 | 2 | 8 |
| Richmond Upon Thames | 110 | 65 | 10 | 35 | 29 | 17 | 3 | 9 |
| Sutton | 145 | 100 | 20 | 25 | 36 | 24 | 5 | 6 |
| Waltham Forest | 325 | 170 | 5 | 150 | 60 | 31 | 1 | 27 |
| *South East* | | | | | | | | |
| *Shire counties* | | | | | | | | |
| Buckinghamshire | 255 | 165 | 40 | 50 | 23 | 15 | 3 | 4 |
| East Sussex | 465 | 300 | 70 | 95 | 44 | 28 | 7 | 9 |
| Hampshire | 905 | 550 | 125 | 230 | 32 | 19 | 4 | 8 |
| Kent | 1,500 | 1,080 | 145 | 270 | 49 | 35 | 5 | 9 |
| Oxfordshire | 470 | 285 | 65 | 120 | 33 | 20 | 4 | 8 |
| Surrey | 670 | 380 | 85 | 205 | 28 | 16 | 4 | 9 |
| West Sussex | 750 | 490 | 75 | 190 | 46 | 30 | 5 | 12 |
| *Unitary authorities* | | | | | | | | |
| Bracknell Forest | 65 | 30 | 5 | 35 | 23 | 10 | 1 | 12 |
| Brighton and Hove | 345 | 275 | 30 | 45 | 71 | 56 | 6 | 9 |
| Isle of Wight | 175 | 125 | 30 | 20 | 67 | 48 | 11 | 8 |
| Medway Towns | 345 | 245 | 15 | 80 | 57 | 41 | 3 | 14 |
| Milton Keynes | [3]— | [3]— | 0 | 0 | [3]— | [3]— | [3]— | [3]— |
| West Berkshire | 130 | 85 | 5 | 40 | 38 | 25 | 2 | 11 |
| Portsmouth | 220 | 130 | 40 | 50 | 54 | 32 | 10 | 12 |
| Reading | 130 | 55 | 15 | 60 | 40 | 17 | 5 | 18 |
| Slough | 135 | 80 | 20 | 40 | 49 | 29 | 6 | 14 |
| Southampton | 385 | 240 | 75 | 65 | 82 | 52 | 16 | 14 |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | 90 | 45 | 5 | 40 | 28 | 14 | 1 | 13 |
| Wokingham | 85 | 45 | 5 | 35 | 25 | 14 | 1 | 10 |

[1] All children looked after under a series of short-term placements have been excluded from this table

[2] Indicates less than 3

[3] Data not available

*Note:*

All numbers of children rounded to the nearest 5.

*Source:*

CLA 100

## NHS Treatment (Costs)

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which categories of person, on the basis of age, marital status, duration of residence in UK, contribution record, immigration status, nationality and other characteristics, are eligible for *(a)* free emergency treatment in NHS hospitals, *(b)* free non-emergency treatment in NHS hospitals, *(c)* free treatment by NHS general medical practitioners, *(d)* free treatment by NHS dental practitioners and *(e)* NHS drug prescriptions; [7954]

(2) what powers he has to recover the cost of treatment under the NHS of persons ineligible for free treatment; [7955]

(3) how much was recovered, in the last year for which information is available, of the cost of treatment under the NHS of persons ineligible for free treatment; and how much is estimated to remain uncollected. [7956]

**Mr. Hutton:** There is no charge for any treatment given in a hospital accident and emergency department regardless of the personal circumstances of the patient. Patients who are not normally resident in the United Kingdom may be charged for any other treatment given by an NHS trust or primary care trust if they, or the treatment they are being given, are not specifically exempt from charges under the terms of the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 1989, as amended. Copies of these regulations are available in the Library.

The regulations place an obligation on health authorities, NHS trusts and primary care trusts to determine if a patient should be charged for their hospital treatment and, if so, to make and recover a charge for that treatment.

There is no separately identifiable record held centrally of the amounts recovered from charge-liable overseas patients or the amount outstanding from them at any one time.

There is no charge for any treatment which a general medical practitioner regards as emergency or immediately necessary, regardless of the personal circumstances of the patient. General medical and dental practitioners have discretion to accept or reject any patient, whether ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom or not, for NHS treatment subject, in the case of dentistry, to the same charges as other UK residents. They are advised however to offer private treatment if it appears that a patient has come to the UK specifically to obtain treatment. Guidance on the eligibility of overseas patients to free primary care has been placed in the Library.

Patients who are entitled to NHS hospital treatment or who have been accepted as NHS patients by a general practitioner or dentist are entitled to prescriptions on the same basis as other UK residents.

## Drugs (Children)

**Dr. Evan Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what recent assessment he has made of drugs being used for the treatment of children which are not licensed for that purpose; [5278]

(2) what assessment he has made of the need for research to establish the safety and efficacy of all drugs used in the treatment of children; [5276]

(3) what estimate he has made of the number of children who *(a)* died and *(b)* were injured as a result of treatment with drugs not licensed for the treatment of children in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement; [5274]

(4) what steps he is taking to ensure that pharmaceutical companies in the United Kingdom provide clear dosage information for children and adults on all drugs they produce; and if he will make a statement; [5275]

(5) what percentage of medicines used for treatment of children do not have a dosage approved by the Medicines Control Agency; and if he will make a statement. [5277]

**Ms Blears** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* We recognise the critical importance of this issue and agree that children should have access to medicines that have been fully evaluated to the same high standards of safety, quality and efficacy as those available for the adult population. The issue is not confined to the United Kingdom, but affects the whole of Europe and the United States. Medicines regulation in the UK derives largely from European legislation and an international approach to the issue is therefore needed.

We have consequently raised the profile of this issue at a European level, including taking the lead in developing a European guideline, adopted in 1997, to encourage companies to undertake appropriate clinical trials on the use of medicines in the treatment of children. This formed the basis for an international guideline, which came into operation in January in the EU, and also applies in the USA and Japan. In addition, the Council of the European Union has asked the European Commission to bring forward measures to make sure that medicines for children are fully adapted to their specific needs. We are presently waiting for their proposals. However, the Commission has stated its intention to comply with this request. The UK will play an active role in the development of this initiative to ensure that effective solutions are found.

In addition, the Committee on Proprietary Medicinal Products (CPMP), the scientific advisory committee of the European Medicines Evaluation Agency (EMEA), recognising the importance of this topic has announced its intention to set up a Paediatric Expert Group to advise the EMEA and its scientific committees on all questions relating to the development and use of medicinal products in children. The UK has nominated representatives to this Paediatric Expert Group.

In the meantime, the UK Government have taken important steps to address the issue at a national level within the existing regulatory framework. The Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM), an independent expert committee that advises the Licensing Authority has established a Paediatric Sub-Group to provide expert advice on the regulatory strategy to improve the availability of medicines licensed for use in children. MCA now routinely asks companies for paediatric development plans where appropriate. Pharmaceutical companies are required by the Licensing Authority to provide dosage information in the Summary of Product Characteristics when a Marketing Authorisation for their

medicinal product is granted or amended in the UK. This dosage information must be supported by the findings from clinical trials undertaken in the relevant adult or paediatric patient population.

The safety of all medicines whether licensed, used outside the terms of their licence, or unlicensed, is monitored by the Medicines Control Agency and CSM. Various data sources are used for monitoring safety including: the UK Yellow Card Scheme for reporting suspected adverse drug reactions, suspected adverse drug reaction reports from abroad, the world-wide medical and scientific literature, clinical trial reports and periodic safety updates from manufacturers. The UK Yellow Card Scheme acts as an early warning system for drug safety hazards but is not a scheme for recording all suspected adverse reactions that occur in the UK. Data from the Yellow Card Scheme cannot, therefore, provide estimates of the incidence of adverse reactions, including fatal adverse reactions occurring in children. The CSM Working Group on Paediatric Medicines also advises on the collection of information on adverse reactions in relation to unlicensed use of medicines in children.

## DEFENCE

### Army Strength

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the strength and complement is of each regiment in the UK. [6953]

**Mr. Ingram:** The establishments and actual strengths of each regiment based in the United Kingdom as at 1 September 2001 are shown in the table. The figures do not include the Royal Irish (Home Service), Special Forces or the Territorial Army.

| Unit | Establishment[1] | Actual strength[2] as at 1 September 2001 |
|---|---|---|
| Household Cavalry Regt. | 463 | 455 |
| Household Cavalry Mounted Regt. | 340 | 327 |
| Queens Dragoon Guards | 398 | 437 |
| Kings Royal Hussars | 497 | 465 |
| Light Dragoons | 469 | 434 |
| 1 Royal Horse Artillery | 571 | 509 |
| 19 Regt. Royal Artillery | 341 | 311 |
| 40 Regt. Royal Artillery | 571 | 552 |
| 2 Signal Regt. | [3]552 | 376 |
| 14 Signal Regt. | 718 | 509 |
| 21 Signal Regt. | 593 | 380 |
| 30 Signal Regt. | [4]695 | 612 |
| 1 Grenadier Guards | 623 | 586 |
| 1 Coldstream Guards | 612 | 613 |
| 1 Scots Guard | 624 | 594 |
| 1 Welsh Guards | 670 | 681 |
| 1 Royal Scots | 610 | 519 |
| 1 Princess of Wales's Royal Regt. | 670 | 618 |
| 2 Princess of Wales's Royal Regt. | 687 | 608 |
| 2 Royal Regt. of Fusiliers | 620 | 517 |
| 1 Kings | 670 | 583 |
| 1 Royal Anglian | 667 | 642 |
| 2 Royal Anglian | 620 | 599 |
| 1 Devonshire and Dorset Regt. | 623 | 539 |
| 1 Light Infantry | 620 | 609 |
| 2 Light Infantry | 667 | 643 |
| 1 Prince of Wales Own | 620 | 516 |
| 1 Green Howards | 651 | 554 |
| 1 Royal Highland Fusiliers | 621 | 548 |
| 1 Royal Welsh Fusiliers | 620 | 636 |
| 1 Kings Own Scottish Borderers | 668 | 655 |
| 1 Royal Irish | 688 | [5]691 |
| 1 Royal Gloucestershire Berkshire and Wiltshire Regt. | 616 | 555 |
| 1 Worcestershire Forester Regt. | 610 | 612 |
| 1 Queens Lancashire Regt. | 667 | 568 |
| 1 Staffords | 670 | 570 |
| 1 Highlanders | 624 | 504 |
| 1 Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders | 617 | 584 |
| 1 Parachute Regt. | 620 | 602 |
| 2 Parachute Regt. | 686 | [6]683 |
| 3 Parachute Regt. | 667 | 701 |
| 2 Royal Gurkha Rifles | 706 | 734 |
| 1 Royal Green Jackets | 620 | 588 |
| 3 Regt. Army Air Corps | 307 | 305 |
| 4 Regt. Army Air Corps | 302 | 317 |

[1] Establishment strength source is from Directorate of Communications Information Systems (Army)
[2] Actual strength source is from Defence Analytical Services Agency (Army)
[3] Includes Gurkha Sig. Sqn.
[4] Includes Gurkha Sig. Sqn.
[5] Includes Gurkha Reinforcement Company
[6] Includes Gurkha Reinforcement Company

### Type 45 Destroyer

**Mr. Francois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the type 45 destroyer will regularly operate a helicopter; [6979]

(2) where the new type 45 destroyers will have their home port; [6981]

(3) if the forward equipment programme contains full functioning for type 45 destroyers; [6985]

(4) how many of the proposed type 45 destroyers will be available for operations, and excluding those in refit, at any one time; [6980]

(5) what the in-service date is for the new type 45 destroyer; [6984]

(6) what the planned complement is of *(a)* officers and *(b)* ratings on the new type 45 destroyer; and with which command system the type 45 destroyer will be equipped; [6978]

(7) when the last of the new type 45 destroyers is expected to enter service with the Royal Navy. [6986]

**Dr. Moonie:** On current plans, we expect that the first type 45 destroyer will enter service with the Royal Navy in 2007 and that the last will enter service in 2014.

We have yet to decide where the type 45 destroyers will have their base port. The decision is the subject of on-going work which will also take account of the base porting requirements of other vessels in the procurement programme such as the Future Aircraft Carrier and the Future Surface Combatant.

The forward equipment programme includes funding for up to 12 type 45 destroyers. Capability upgrades included in the type 45 incremental acquisition plan will be funded within the type 45 programme budget. Other capability upgrades, including those to reflect future changes in defence requirements and technology advances, would be funded as appropriate.

The currently planned complement of the type 45 is approximately 190 personnel, of whom around 20 will be officers and 170 other ranks. We are continuing to

examine the scope for driving down the complement even further and to introduce a more flexible and adaptable style of crewing. Accommodation standards will be significantly better than in earlier classes of warship.

BAE Systems Electronics, the Prime Contractor, has selected a consortium comprising Alenia Marconi Systems and BAE Systems Combat and Radar Systems to develop and manufacture a Command System, known as the Combat Management System, specifically for the type 45.

Assuming a class of 12 type 45s, we expect that nine or 10 ships would, on average, be available at any one time to the Commander-in-Chief Fleet for tasking, while two or three would be undergoing maintenance, including one or two in refit.

In most operations we currently expect to have a Lynx helicopter embarked on the type 45 destroyer. The type 45 will also be interoperable with the Merlin helicopter. The type 45 destroyer will be a versatile platform, able to operate a variety of other helicopters; the ship's large flight deck can take helicopters up to and including Chinook size.

## NATO

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what support the Government are providing to those countries seeking to join NATO in building up their armed forces; and if he will make a statement. [8031]

**Mr. Hoon:** As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear, we support the further enlargement of NATO when the political and military conditions agreed at the 1997 Madrid and 1999 Washington Summits are met. To support this process, we are assisting aspirants with their preparations through the Membership Action Plan, which was launched at the 1999 Washington Summit. The main objectives are to promote defence reform and restructuring within a democratic context and to support the development of flexible, modern armed forces capable of contributing to peace-keeping operations. Assistance takes many forms including: English language training to support interoperability; the secondment of military and civilian advisers to aspirant countries; the provision of a wide range of training opportunities including Non-Commissioned Officer training at the permanent British Military Advisory and Training Team based in the Czech Republic; exercise opportunities in the UK and in aspirant countries; seminars on specialist subjects; and high-level visits.

## Sustained Hypersonic Flight Experiment

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much the Sustained Hypersonic Flight Experiment programme is expected to cost; for how many years the programme is projected to last; and if he will make a statement. [7337]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Sustained Hypersonic Flight Experiment is an experimental programme with the primary aim of obtaining vital engineering data to allow the Ministry of Defence to determine the credibility and risk levels associated with the development and future possible procurement of hypersonic cruise missiles.

The programme is expected to last for six years. The first year is a preliminary study costing £172,000. The cost to MOD for the following five years is expected to be approximately £1 million per annum.

The programme will be reviewed at the end of the first year and again at the end of the third year to ensure its aims remain viable and that the project has a manageable level of technical risk before continuation funding is released.

An important part of the preliminary study phase is to seek international collaborative partners to increase the overall value of this research programme to MOD.

## Small Arms

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which countries the UK has exported small arms; how much revenue was generated from such sales in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement. [7338]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Government's Annual Reports on Strategic Export Controls (Part III) provide details of the number of weapons and small arms exported, by country. Information on the total value of guns, small arms and parts exported in each of the last five years has been published in the Ministry of Defence publication "UK Defence Statistics 2001" (Table 1.13), which is available in the Library of the House. In both cases the definition, which is based on Customs Tariff codes, includes large as well as small calibre weapons.

The UK is not a major exporter of small arms. It is Government policy that small arms which are declared surplus by the Ministry of Defence—other than automatic weapons which are routinely destroyed—are made available only to Governments, for use by acceptable military, paramilitary and police organisations, either directly or through duly licensed entities authorised to procure weapons.

## Long Range Strike Weapons

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will increase spending on long range strike weapons; and if he will make a statement. [8032]

**Dr. Moonie:** The UK invests a significant amount of money in its long range strike weapons capability. The Tomahawk Land Attack Missile has already demonstrated its worth in Kosovo and the current operation against international terrorism; the Tornado GR1 to GR4 conversion is proceeding well, with upgraded aircraft now in service; new GPS Interim Precision Guided Bombs are due to enter service at the end of this month; and we are planning to take delivery of the Stormshadow conventional air launched stand off missile next year.

The UK's requirements for long range deep strike weapons are, however, kept under constant review. Decisions on whether there is a need for increased spending will be taken as and when gaps in the UK's existing capability are identified.

We are also currently reviewing our future requirements for long range strike weapons as part of the Future Offensive Air Capability Study. This study is examining the deep strike capability that the UK will need

in the 2015–20 timeframe, and will inform decisions on a number of equipment projects, including the Future Offensive Air System.

### Meteor Air-to-Air Missile

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the projected cost is of his Department's collaborative effort to develop, produce, and support the Meteor Beyond-Visual-Range-Air-to-Air Missile; how much of this development will be carried in the UK; which UK companies are involved in this project; and if he will make a statement. [7323]

**Dr. Moonie:** To the UK, the whole life cost of the Meteor missile will be in the region of £1.5 billion. This figure includes the cost of development, production and in-service support. Some 35 per cent. of the work undertaken during the development phase will be carried out in the UK, and matches the UK's financial contribution to that phase.

Matra BAE Dynamics (UK) (MBD) will be the prime contractor for the Meteor programme with Alenia Marconi Systems, Royal Ordnance, Roband, Fairey Hydraulics, BAE Systems—Systems and Sensors Division, and Missile and Space Batteries acting as first level UK sub-contractors.

Subject to conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding with all of our partner nations, and negotiation of satisfactory contractual terms and conditions with MBD, we hope to be able to place a demonstration and manufacture contract for Meteor by the end of this year.

### Ministerial Visits

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement; [6939]

(2) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement. [6940]

**Dr. Moonie:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 823W, to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond).

### Depleted Uranium

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish an annual report on *(a)* future DU test firing proposals and *(b)* environmental testing results from the previous 12 months at the DERA testing facility at Dundrennan, Kirkcudbrightshire. [6506]

**Dr. Moonie:** Under current practice, reports on annual monitoring surveys of the marine and terrestrial environment are provided to Dumfries and Galloway Council, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and placed in the Library of the House. On 28 March 2001, the Ministry of Defence produced reports containing results from the 1999 marine and terrestrial environment monitoring surveys—copies are held in the Library of the House under reference DEP01–872. Reports for the 2000 monitoring surveys are being prepared and will be published shortly. This practice will continue. In addition to the routine marine and terrestrial environmental surveys, a more general survey to try to find any previously undetected depleted uranium (DU) fragments is currently being conducted at the range and results will be published next year.

MOD has no plans to produce an annual report outlining future DU firing at the Kirkcudbright Training Area range. Further firings may be required while the ammunition remains in service, and I will publicise the details when plans are agreed.

### Aircraft Carriers

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the projected cost is of building the Royal Navy's two new aircraft carriers; where the assembly plant is; and if he will make a statement. [7324]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Royal Navy's two new aircraft carriers will be built at an estimated cost of up to £2.9 billion. The vessels will be built in the UK and no decisions have been made on construction or assembly sites.

### Battlefield Light Utility Helicopter

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the upgrade of the British Army's Battlefield Light Utility Helicopter is projected to be completed; and if he will make a statement. [7317]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Battlefield Light Utility Helicopter is not an upgrade programme but will replace the capability provided by the Army Lynx Mks 7 and 9. It is planned to enter service from the middle of this decade and to have replaced the current Lynx by the early years of the next.

### Weapon Modification Programme

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which companies bidded for the individual weapon and light support weapon modification programme; and if he will make a statement. [7320]

**Dr. Moonie:** The modification programme for the SA80 Weapon System is being undertaken by Heckler & Koch GmbH, Oberndorf, Germany. H&K are wholly owned by a British company, BAE Systems Royal Ordnance (Weapons and Munitions). No other companies were invited to bid for the programme as H&K are the Design Authority for the modifications.

The contract for up to 200,000 weapons is on schedule with some 10,000 modified weapons available in the UK for issue to the armed services.

### A400M Project

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs Airbus UK's wing design development role in the A400M project is expected to create; and if he will make a statement. [7321]

**Dr. Moonie:** Airbus UK have estimated that work associated with A400M wing design and manufacture will create or secure over 2,500 long-term high-skill jobs. They have also calculated that indirect employment could bring this figure up to 7,500. The proportion of these jobs attributable specifically to the design development role has not been disclosed.

Although there is no direct relationship between offtake and workshare, we are confident that the number of jobs estimated by Airbus UK is commensurate with our investment in this programme.

### Ordnance Board Project

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the Ordnance Board report Board Project G/220A dated 23 February 1982. [7114]

**Dr. Moonie:** The document is currently withheld under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

A review is being conducted to determine whether some or all of the information can be released into the public domain.

I will write to my hon. Friend when this review is complete, and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Wessex Helicopter

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the job losses at RAF Shrewsbury in connection with work on the Wessex helicopter. [7136]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Wessex servicing work at RAF Shawbury, new Shrewsbury, is to come to an end due to the withdrawal of the Wessex helicopter from service.

The helicopter maintenance personnel that undertake this work are employed by FB Heliservices Limited.

FB Heliservices advise that as a result of the end of the Wessex element of the RAF Shawbury maintenance contact they are facing a redundancy situation for up to 39 employees. The company has advised us that it is actively pursuing alternative employment for the staff involved and is in consultation with both the recognised Trade Unions and individual employees. As part of its efforts to find alternative work, the company has made a proposal to place some other Ministry of Defence helicopter servicing work at RAF Shawbury. This proposal is being considered.

### Aircraft Manufacture

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the United Kingdom's ability to continue to manufacture aircraft. [6505]

**Dr. Moonie:** The UK aerospace industry is involved in a number of current and future military aircraft projects such as Eurofighter, A400M and the US Joint Strike Fighter programme. This demonstrates the UK's continuing technical and engineering ability to play a major role in the manufacture of military aircraft.

### Future Offensive Aircraft Capability

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to approve the development of the Future Offensive Aircraft Capability. [6504]

**Dr. Moonie:** The Future Offensive Air Capability study is an Operational Analysis-based study examining the deep strike capability that the UK will need in the 2015–20 timeframe. It will inform decisions that we expect to take in the next two to three years on a number of equipment projects, including for the Future Offensive Air System project.

### Royal Navy

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which companies are developing technology capable of integrating the US Navy's co-operative engagement capability into the UK Royal Navy's surface fleet; what the projected cost of this system is; and if he will make a statement. [7319]

**Dr. Moonie:** This is a matter for the Chief Executive of the Defence Procurement Agency. I have asked the Chief Executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Robert Walmsley to Mr. Michael Hancock, dated 16 October 2001:*

I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Defence concerning integration of the US Navy's Co-operative Engagement Capability into the Royal Navy's surface fleet. This matter falls within my area of responsibility as Chief of Defence Procurement and Chief Executive of the Defence Procurement Agency. I refer you to the answer given on 25 July 2000 (official record col 542).

Assessment studies to fit the Co-operative Engagement Capability (CEC) to Type 23 Frigates are being undertaken by Lockheed Martin UK Integrated Systems and Raytheon Systems Limited, with each company being supported by a number of potential sub-contractors. A competition has been conducted between them for the second phase of assessment work. Contract award is forecast for the first half of 2002.

A separate package of work, to assess fitting the capability to the Type 45 destroyer, is being undertaken by BAE Systems Electronics Limited, the Type 45 Prime Contractor.

The estimated procurement cost of integrating CEC into Type 23 and Type 45 is £255M and the latest estimate of the whole life cost is £415M. Both figures are at 2001 outturn prices. I regret that the figure of £250M for whole life costs, given in the answer of 25 July 2000, related to support costs alone and was intended to be additional to the quoted procurement costs. The correct whole life cost estimate at that time was therefore £424M.

The programme is still at an early stage; costs, performance and timing will be refined before the main investment decision at Main Gate.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Speakers' Corner

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what representations she has received concerning the impact of pop concerts on activities at Speakers' Corner. [6061]

**Tessa Jowell:** Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its chief executive, William Weston. Mr. Weston wrote to the hon. Member in July.

*Letter from William Weston to Mr. Peter Ainsworth, dated July 2001:*

I have been asked by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to reply to your Parliamentary Question about what representations have been received concerning the impact of pop concerts on activities at Speakers' Corner. I regret that it was not possible to answer your question before the Summer recess. However, the information you requested is as follows.

I received an e.mail on 19 July from Heiko Khoo of the Speakers' Corner Association who believes that the right to free speech at Speakers' Corner, enshrined in the 1872 Parks and Gardens Act, is encroached by the arrangements made to facilitate large concerts on the adjacent Parade Ground. Mr Khoo questioned the Agency's right to make any restrictions on access to the area, and asked why such concerts could not be held in one of the other Royal Parks instead.

### Football Fixtures

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what representations she has received calling for international football fixtures taking place in England to continue moving between major premiership venues. [7224]

**Mr. Caborn** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Department has received no representations calling for England home international football fixtures to continue moving between major premiership venues. We have had a number of representations about the use of the national stadium, and a small number of representations about the use of a specific ground for the FA cup semi-final.

### British-made Films

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many British-made films have been made as part of European co-productions in the last five years; and if she will make a statement. [8056]

**Dr. Howells:** The number of films made under the UK's European co-production treaties, and the Council of Europe's convention on cinematographic co-production, is as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 12 |
| 1997 | 7 |
| 1998 | 13 |
| 1999 | 10 |
| 2000 | 21 |
| 2001 (to August) | 24 |

### Ministerial Visits

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) if she will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in her Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if she will make a statement; [6887]

(2) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in her Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if she will make a statement. [6888]

**Tessa Jowell:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 823W.

### World Athletic Championships

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) if it is Government policy to underwrite the 2005 world athletics championships; [7858]

(2) if it is Government policy that Sheffield city council should underwrite the 2005 world athletics championships. [7860]

**Tessa Jowell:** The Government have previously made it clear that in view of the size and importance of the IAAF world athletics championships, they would ensure that the underwriting of the event is resolved. The Government will consider this issue again once the decision of the IAAF council meeting in late November has decided whether to accept our proposal of Sheffield as the venue for the 2005 championships.

### Lottery Proceeds

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list the total grants paid by each organisation responsible for allocating lottery proceeds, broken down by county in both absolute terms and pounds per thousand population. [7502]

**Mr. Caborn:** The information held on lottery award proceeds is not broken down by county, but is available by local authority area. I will place copies of the information requested in the Libraries of both Houses.

### English Heritage

**Mr. Colman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she intends to undertake a review of English Heritage. [8270]

**Tessa Jowell:** As part of the Department's programme of quinquennial reviews of its public bodies, my right hon.

Friend the Minister for the Arts is today announcing that the Government will shortly start a review of English Heritage.

The review will include an evaluation of the role and functions of English Heritage and how those functions can best be carried out, and a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which it delivers services to its users. The review will include a public consultation exercise. A copy of the consultation paper can be found on DCM's website, www.culture.gov.uk. under "heritage, libraries & museums"; "historic environment".

We estimate that the review will be completed by next summer. A copy of the announcement has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

## WALES

### Civil Servants

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many and what proportion of each civil service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the UK; what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement; [6814]

(2) if he will estimate the number of staff employed by his Department by region and nation of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6810]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** At October 2001, my Department has a complement of 48 posts as follows:

| *Grade* | *Number working mainly in London* | *Percentage* | *Number working mainly in Wales* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senior Civil Service (SCS) | 1 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Band G (formerly Grade 6) | 1 | 50 | 1 | 50 |
| Band F (formerly Grade 7) | 5 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Band E (formerly SEO) | 1 | 50 | 1 | 50 |
| Band D (formerly HEO) | 9 | 82 | 2 | 18 |
| Band C (formerly EO) | 10 | 83 | 2 | 17 |
| Band B (formerly AO) | 10 | 83 | 2 | 17 |
| Band A (formerly AA) | 3 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 40 | 83 | 8 | 17 |

Pay depends on the individual's permanent base rather than the location of their current post. Present scales are:

£

| | *Permanently based* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *in London* | *'Elsewhere* |
| SCS | Within the range 55,000–60,000 | |
| Band G | 41,906–58,705 | 37,832–52,965 |
| Band F | 34,542–48,160 | 30,792–43,109 |
| Band E | 26,855–37,207 | 23,481–32,873 |
| Band D | 21,042–28,942 | 17,964–25,149 |
| Band C | 16,293–22,736 | 13,481–18,874 |
| Band B | 13,757–17,609 | 10,589–14,084 |
| Band A | 12,175–14,850 | 9,024–11,551 |

'These staff ordinarily receive a 10 per cent. recruitment and retention allowance while working in London.

### Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the total amount of spending by his Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of his Department's total spending this constitutes; and if he will make a statement. [6815]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** The net operating cost of the Wales Office in 2000–01 was £7,121 million. Other than the running costs of my Department in Whitehall, this was all spent in Wales, predominantly by way of grant to the National Assembly for Wales.

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the total expenditure was on *(a)* advertising, *(b)* polling, *(c)* focus groups, *(d)* design consultants, *(e)* caterers, *(f)* production of departmental publications and *(g)* photographs/photographers by his Department for each year since 1995 in (i) cash and (ii) real terms; what was (A) the annual percentage increase in spending on each category and (B) spending on each category as a percentage of the total departmental running costs; and if he will make a statement. [6894]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office gave on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, Columns 1009–12W.

### Ministerial Travel

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement. [6896]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** Records are not held separately for expenditure by the former Welsh Office on overseas travel. Since the Wales Office was established on 1 July 1999, Ministers have not used any non-commercial flights for official overseas visits.

### Departmental Spending (Staff)

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate total staff costs for his Department and its agencies by nation and region of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6811]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** The staff costs of my Department in 2000–01 were £1,415,000. No geographical breakdown is available. The Wales Office has no agencies.

### Business Rates

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total amount of business rates collected in Wales in *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999 and *(d)* 2000. [7697]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** The total amount of revenue raised in Wales from the business rate between 1996–97 and 1998–99 was as follows:

| *Year* | *£* |
|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 427,156,005 |
| 1997–98 | 460,306,025 |
| 1998–99 | 464,847,538 |

Since 1 July 1999, this has been a matter for the National Assembly for Wales.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Probation Board for Northern Ireland

**Liz Blackman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Probation Board for Northern Ireland's annual report for 2000–01 will be published. [8243]

**Jane Kennedy:** The Probation Board's annual report for 2000–01 was published on 16 October 2001.

A copy of the report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### Electoral Research Project

**Liz Blackman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the results of the electoral research project recently commissioned on the district council and parliamentary elections which were held in Northern Ireland. [8244]

**Mr. Browne:** I have today placed copies of the electoral research report in both Libraries of the House.

### Oversight Commissioner

**Liz Blackman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the latest report received from the Oversight Commissioner. [8245]

**Jane Kennedy:** In accordance with section 68(4)(a) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, I have today laid a copy of the Oversight Commissioner's second statutory report for the year 2001 in both Houses.

### Northern Ireland Policing Board

**Liz Blackman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board; and if he will publish the names of those bodies consulted by him under the provisions of Schedule 1 Part 111 paragraph 8(2)(c) to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. [8246]

**Jane Kennedy:** On 29 September my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced the appointment of the following nine independent members:

Denis Bradley
Viscount Brookeborough
Brian Dougherty
Barry Gilligan
Tom Kelly
Pauline McCabe
Rosaleen Moore
Professor Desmond Rea
Suneil Sharma.

The 10 members nominated by the political parties, drawn from the Assembly are:

Alex Attwood MLA
Joe Byrne MLA
Fred Cobain MLA
Ivan Davis MLA
William Hay MLA
Lord Kilclooney MLA
James Leslie MLA
Eddie McGrady MP MLA
Ian Paisley Junior MLA
Sammy Wilson MLA.

The Secretary of State appointed Professor Rea to serve as Chairman and Mr. Denis Bradley to serve as Vice Chairman. A copy of the announcement of 29 September has been placed in the Library of the House.

In line with the requirements of Schedule 1 Part III paragraph 8(2)(c) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, the Secretary of State wrote to the following individuals and bodies at the outset of the process:

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
The Chief Police Officers' Staff Association
The Church of Ireland
The Democratic Unionist Party
The Equality Commission
The Green Party
The Human Rights Commission
The Labour Party
The Methodist Church in Ireland
The Northern Ireland Conservative Party
The Northern Ireland Unionist Party
The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
The Oversight Commissioner
The Police Federation for Northern Ireland
The Presbyterian Church in Ireland
The Progressive Unionist Party
The Roman Catholic Church
Sinn Fein
The Social Democratic and Labour Party
The Superintendents' Association for Northern Ireland
The Ulster Democratic Party
The Ulster Unionist Party
The United Kingdom Unionist Party
The United Unionist Assembly Party
The Workers' Party.

In addition, my right hon. Friend also consulted the First Minister, Deputy First Minister and the 26 district councils. Officials consulted the Commissioner for Public Appointments; approximately 900 other organisations and community groups were also approached by PricewaterhouseCoopers acting on behalf of the Secretary of State.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Regional/Minority Languages Charter

**Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the appointment will be made of the UK member to the Committee of Experts for the Council of Europe European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. [8267]

**Mr. MacShane:** I am pleased to announce that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe elected on 4 October Emyr Lewis as the UK member to the Committee of Experts for the Charter. The Committee of Experts acts as a monitoring mechanism examining the periodical reports submitted by Parties on compliance with the Charter. Emyr Lewis is a fluent Welsh speaker, whose legal expertise and experience of minority language issues make him an ideal representative for the UK on this Committee.

### G8 Summit, Genoa

**Colin Burgon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the aftermath of the G8 summit held in Genoa on 20 July, consular officials from other EU countries were able to gain access to their detained nationals earlier than British consular officials. [8268]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We understand that no other EU state was granted access to their detained nationals ahead of British consular officials. However, detainees were held in several widespread locations, so it is impossible to confirm definitively which nationals were seen first on Wednesday 25 July, when access was finally granted. Our Consul visited one detainee in hospital as early as Sunday 22 July. British consular officials had visited all of our detainees ahead of most other EU states. American officials were the first to gain access to their nationals in the detention centres.

Throughout the night of Wednesday 25 July, when the detainees were awaiting deportation at the airport, British consular officials provided support to British nationals and to many foreigners, including those from other EU countries, in the absence of their own consular representatives.

### United Nations Subscriptions

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United States' paying its United Nations subscriptions. [7301]

**Peter Hain:** The payment of United Nations contributions is the responsibility of individual UN member states. However, we understand that the US Congress has recently agreed to release the second tranche of a US arrears package, worth $582 million. We welcome the forthcoming payment of these funds.

### UN Resolution 1373

**Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on UN Resolution 1373 (2001). [7829]

**Peter Hain:** UN Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), adopted on 28 September, is the first resolution to impose obligations on all states to respond to the global terrorist threat. It focuses on two key areas: suppressing the financing of terrorism and denying terrorists a safe haven from which to operate. The United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the United Nations has been appointed Chairman of the Security Council committee that will monitor the implementation of this Resolution.

The United Kingdom is obliged to implement immediately the mandatory provisions of the resolution. The Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Order 2001, the Terrorism (United Nations Measures) (Overseas Territories) Order 2001, the Terrorism (United Nations Measures) (Isle of Man) Order 2001 and the Terrorism (United Nations Measures) (Channel Islands) Order 2001 were adopted by the Privy Council on 9 October 2001 and came into force on 10 October 2001. They will implement the mandatory provisions on terrorist financing in the United Kingdom, the Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies.

The orders have been made under section 1 of the United Nations Act 1946. They implement paragraph 1(c) and (d) of the resolution by restricting the making available of any funds or financial services to terrorists and providing powers to freeze accounts of suspected terrorists. Paragraph 1(b) on criminalising fundraising for terrorist purposes can be implemented through the Terrorism Act 2000 in the United Kingdom. However, a specific provision on fundraising is included in the Overseas Territories, Isle of Man and Channel Islands Orders. Copies of all four orders have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

We are also considering urgently what further domestic legislation may be required to take action against terrorism in line with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

### Civil Service

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many and what proportion of each civil service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the UK, what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement. [6820]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) employs staff in three of the Regions in England: London, Croydon in South East Region and at Milton Keynes in Eastern Region.

The number of staff by grade at each location and the percentage of the total staff are shown in the table. The FCO has recently completed its own grading structure and the grades shown are the accepted Civil Service Equivalents.

| Grade | London | (%) | Eastern | (%) | South East | (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senior Grade | 29 | 93.5 | 1 | 3.2 | 1 | 3.2 |
| Senior Manager | 75 | 89.3 | 6 | 7.1 | 3 | 3.6 |
| Grade 6 | 91 | 77.1 | 10 | 8.5 | 17 | 14.4 |
| Grade 7 | 225 | 74.2 | 39 | 12.9 | 39 | 12.9 |
| SEO | 142 | 52.8 | 108 | 40.1 | 19 | 7.1 |
| HEO | 436 | 66.9 | 202 | 30.9 | 14 | 2.1 |
| EO | 433 | 75.8 | 120 | 21.0 | 18 | 3.2 |
| AO | 541 | 73.2 | 174 | 23.5 | 24 | 3.2 |
| AA | 259 | 81.7 | 56 | 17.8 | 1 | 0.5 |

The average salaries paid to the staff, including payments towards national insurance and superannuation made by the FCO on behalf of staff are:

£

| Grade | Average salary London | Outside London |
|---|---|---|
| Senior Grade | 111,000 | 111,000 |
| Senior Manager | 75,000 | 75,000 |
| Grade 7 | 60,990 | 52,850 |
| Grade 6 | 49,840 | 44,740 |
| SEO | 37,030 | 37,600 |
| HEO | 30,780 | 31,420 |
| EO | 24,460 | 22,660 |
| AO | 20,630 | 19,005 |
| AA | 15,860 | 14,715 |

### Ministerial Travel

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement; [6936]

(2) if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement. [6935]

**Mr. Straw:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 823W.

### Departmental Spending

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the total amount of spending by his Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of his Department's total spending this constitutes; and if he will make a statement. [6821]

**Mr. MacShane:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 854–56W.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Sellafield (MOX Facility)

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on security arrangements at the MOX facility at Sellafield. [7883]

**Mr. Wilson** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Security at the Sellafield MOX plant complies fully with the standards set by the Director for Civil Nuclear Security, the Government's security Regulator. The Office for Civil Nuclear Security has taken account of the events in the United States of America on 11 September and continues to be satisfied that the security arrangements to be applied by BNFL will provide effective security once the plant starts to operate.

### Renewable Energy

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if it is her policy to allow funds available to support renewable energy to be used towards projects involving energy from waste plants. [7086]

**Mr. Wilson:** The Renewables Obligation Statutory Consultation sets out our proposals for support for renewable sources of energy and clarifies the extent to which electricity generated by energy from waste plants might qualify. Copies of this will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. This document is also available at: "*http://www.dti.gov.uk/renewable/consultations.htm*" and any further responses are now urgently invited as the closing date was 12 October 2001.

In collaboration with the Department of the Environment Transport and Regions (DETR), now the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), we have supported the publication of "Household Waste Management in the UK, Some Examples of Good Practice". This publication illustrates how energy from waste projects can be part of an integrated approach to waste management. Copies of this guide can be ordered from: "nre-enquiries@aeat.co.uk" and copies have been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of UK electricity was produced from renewable resources in the last 12 months; and what percentage of that was produced from *(a)* hydro-electricity, *(b)* wind, *(c)* combined heat and power schemes and *(d)* other; and if she will make a statement. [7361]

**Mr. Wilson:** In 2000, 2.8 per cent. of electricity generated in the UK came from renewable sources. Of that, 49 per cent. was produced from hydro-electricity, 9 per cent. was from wind, and 42 per cent. from other sources (mainly biofuels), within which 4 per cent. was generated in combined heat and power schemes.

Through the Renewables Obligation, and through a package of additional support measures, the Government are creating a strong and growing demand for renewable energy worth over £1 billion by 2010. These measures will provide the right framework for the strong expansion we need in the renewable energy sector.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much was spent in each of the last five years by her Department into the investigation of renewable energy resources. [7348]

**Mr. Wilson:** The Department of Trade and Industry attaches great importance to renewable energy and has set ambitious targets. The new Renewables Obligation will create a long-term market for renewables which will be worth over £1 billion per year by 2010. The Obligation will be the main mechanism by which we will meet our renewables targets and will be underpinned by direct Government funding worth over £260 million between 2001 and 2004. This will include an extensive capital grants programme for the early development of offshore wind and energy crops, the initial stage of a major photovoltaics demonstration programme and a boost for research and development.

The Department funds research into renewable energy resources both through its own Sustainable Energy Programme and through the Science Budget which supports the Research Councils. Spend over each of the last five years, and the budgets for this year and next, which allow for significant expansion, are set out in the table.

*£ million*

| *Year* | *DTI Sustainable Energy Programme* | *Research Councils* |
|---|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 16.3 | 2.2 |
| 1997–98 | 13.0 | 2.9 |
| 1998–99 | 11.3 | 3.1 |
| 1999–2000 | 12.5 | 2.4 |
| 2000–01 | 13.1 | 2.8 |
| 2001–02 | 18.5 | 5.0 |
| 2002–03 | 18.5 | 5.1 |

[1] Budget

In order to promote a strategic approach to renewable energy planning from the regional level downwards, the Government in February 2000 initiated work on regional assessments and targets for renewable energy provision based upon, and where necessary updating, existing resource studies. Most of these assessments are now complete, with the remainder to be completed by the end of 2001. Spend on these studies, which is included in the wider figures above for the Sustainable Energy Programme, was £0.3 million in 2000–01 and is expected to be £0.25 million in 2001–02.

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make it her policy to support the construction of renewable energy sources rather than nuclear power stations; if she will announce a moratorium on nuclear power station construction in the UK; and if she will make a statement. [6757]

**Mr. Wilson:** The Government are putting in hand a range of measures to support renewable energy, including a Renewables Obligation on electricity suppliers, exemption from the climate change levy and grant funding in excess of £260 million over the next three years.

The Cabinet Office's Performance and Innovation Unit is also currently carrying out an energy review and will report to the Prime Minister by the end of the year. The aim of the review is to set out the objectives of energy policy and to ensure that current policy commitments are consistent with longer-term goals. The review is considering all sources of energy including renewables and nuclear as well as the enhancement of energy efficiency. At this stage it is too early to draw any conclusions.

## Civil Service (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of her Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7229]

**Ms Hewitt:** The normal retirement age for staff in my Department, its executive agencies and, subject to the exceptions below, public sector bodies which it sponsors, is 60 for staff at range 5 (formerly Executive Officer level) and above and 65 for staff below this level.

In the Research Councils, the normal retirement age is 60 for all staff with the exception of the Medical Research Council where it is 65. The Design Council does not have a compulsory retirement age for its staff. In Regional Development Agencies the normal retirement age is 65 with the exception of the East of England Development Agency and the South West Regional Development Agency where it is 60. However, for those RDA staff who are members of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme, the normal retirement age is 60.

## Export Control Bill

**Colin Burgon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what secondary legislation the Government plan to introduce under the Export Control Bill; if the Government will hold a public consultation on that legislation; and if she will make a statement. [8317]

**Nigel Griffiths:** My Department and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport have made available to Parliament dummy orders, that is drafts of possible orders using the powers in the Bill as they currently stand. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House. They are also available from my Department's library and on our website (www.dti.gov.uk/export.control). These dummy orders have been provided to assist Parliament in its scrutiny of the Bill by providing a clear indication of how the Government would propose to use the powers that would be conferred by the Bill.

We intend, however, to hold a full public consultation on drafts of the orders to be made following enactment of the Bill. This public consultation, which we currently expect to hold in the spring, will provide interested parties with an opportunity to comment on the details of secondary legislation that the Government propose to introduce under the Bill. We currently expect the dummy orders to be the basis for preparation of these draft orders for full public consultation.

The provisions in the dummy orders are based both on existing secondary export control legislation, consolidated and rationalised where appropriate, and on the Government's proposals for new controls to be introduced under the Bill. Proposals for new controls were set out in the Consultation Document on the Draft Bill (Cm 5091) published in March 2001.

The Consultation Document sought views on options for certain aspects of the new controls on technical assistance and trafficking and brokering. The provisions of the dummy orders reflect decisions taken on these options in the light of the consultation results. Views were sought on whether controls on the provision of technical assistance to embargoed destinations should be introduced on a unilateral basis. The Government have concluded that such unilateral action is unlikely to be effective but we will use the powers in the Bill to implement requirements in international embargoes to impose controls on technical assistance. This will enable a higher maximum penalty to apply. In addition, as explained in the Consultation Document, the Government propose to introduce controls on the provision of technical assistance to weapons of mass destruction and related missile programmes.

The Consultation Document proposed the introduction of controls on trafficking and brokering to embargoed destinations, of equipment whose export we have banned because of evidence of its use in torture and of long-range missiles that would apply to the activities of United Kingdom persons overseas as well as to activities carried out in the United Kingdom. The Consultation Document also set out proposals for additional controls on trafficking and brokering. Views were sought on whether these additional controls should apply to all equipment on the "Military List" (the "Military List" is contained in existing export control legislation) or just to weapons, ammunition and certain other key military or paramilitary items. Views were also sought on whether these additional controls should apply to the activities of United Kingdom persons carrying out activities wholly abroad as well as to activities taking place in the United Kingdom. The Government have concluded, in the light of the consultation held, that these additional controls should apply to all equipment on the "Military List" and to activities, any part of which takes place in the United Kingdom, but not to the activities of United Kingdom nationals carried out wholly abroad. The Government will, however, as noted above, apply controls on trafficking and brokering by United Kingdom persons overseas of equipment used in torture and long-range missiles and trafficking and brokering by such persons to embargoed destinations. The Government will press for international embargoes to be imposed on countries in conflict.

Finally, the Consultation Document also sought views on proposals to replicate the current licensing regime for exports of objects of cultural interest. In the light of responses which broadly welcomed these proposals, the dummy order on the export of objects of cultural interest reflects the proposals contained in the Consultation Document.

## Wind Turbines

**Mr. Carmichael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to encourage the generation of electricity using wind power. [7326]

**Mr. Wilson:** The wind energy industry will benefit substantially from the introduction of the Renewables Obligation which will provide a long-term market for renewable energy for the next 25 years. This market will be worth over £1 billion per year by 2010 and suppliers are expected to meet a significant proportion of their obligations from wind energy. Existing contracts made under the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO) arrangements will be honoured, and we propose to table an Order before the end of 2001 to allow locational flexibility for these projects.

Wind energy also benefits from exemption from the Climate Change Levy.

By promoting the development of regional plans for renewable energy, and through the proposed update of National Planning Policy Guidance Note on Renewable Energy (PPG22), the Government are seeking to ensure that local planning decisions on proposed wind energy projects are taken in the context of wider policy objectives.

At least £49 million has already been announced for a DTI and New Opportunities Fund capital grants scheme for offshore wind energy projects. The offshore wind industry could also potentially benefit from forthcoming decisions on the extra £100 million for renewable energy pledged by the Prime Minister earlier in the year.

We have consulted extensively with the wind industry on the design of the capital grants scheme and intend to launch the scheme shortly. We have also consulted on our proposals for a "one-stop shop" to help developers seeking to obtain the necessary consents for offshore projects.

Wind energy projects are also eligible to apply for support under the Department's Sustainable Energy programme, which will provide funding for renewables research and development of £55 million in total over this and the next two financial years.

## Electricity Generation

**Mr. Carmichael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money the Government plan to spend on promoting the generation of electricity in the year 2002–03. [7328]

**Mr. Wilson:** Government action to promote the generation of electricity is directed to the sustainable energy sector. Subject to market circumstances, support from the Renewables Obligation and Scottish Obligation could be worth up to £282 million in 2002–03, and continuing support for the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO) and its Scottish equivalent up to £167 million.

The Government's proposed budget for 2002–03 for our sustainable energy research and development programme is £18.5 million.

A proportion of direct Government spending on capital grants and other support schemes for renewable energy will also occur in 2002–03. The cost of these schemes over a three-year period is expected to exceed £200 million.

Exempting renewable energy from the Climate Change Levy will save the renewable energy industry an estimated £24 million in 2002–03.

### Electricity Trading

**Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures the Government will take to ensure that the new electricity trading arrangements do not penalise Combined heat and power and renewable generators. [7056]

**Mr. Wilson:** In advance of going live, a number of smaller generators as well as the Combined Heat and Power Association (CHPA) and the Association of Electricity Producers (AEP) expressed concern that the new electricity trading arrangements (NETA) would severely disadvantage them. In view of this, on 21 February, the then Minister for Energy, asked Ofgem to undertake a review of the impact of NETA on smaller generators based on its first two months of live operation.

On 31 August, Ofgem published their report to the DTI on the "Review of the Initial Impact of NETA on Smaller Generators", as well as a report "The New Electricity Trading Arrangements—Review of the First Three Months".

The Government believe that the key findings in Ofgem's report on the first three months of NETA are encouraging and indicate that, overall, NETA has created a more competitive market.

The Government have reviewed and considered Ofgem's reports, as well as views put forward by industry, both in the course of Ofgem's review, and to DTI. In the light of these, I will be issuing a consultation document.

### Post Office Closures

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many sub-post offices closed in the Huntingdon constituency in each financial year since 1995–96. [6168]

**Mr. Alexander:** I understand from Post Office Ltd. that data on the post office network are not held on a parliamentary constituency basis.

### Sub-post Offices (Compensation)

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans are *(a)* in place and *(b)* under consideration to compensate proprietors of sub-post offices whose businesses become unprofitable after withdrawal of benefit payments by cash. [6497]

**Mr. Alexander:** Benefit and pension recipients who wish to collect their benefits in cash at post offices will continue to be able to do so after the change in payment arrangements, beginning in April 2003, by means of Universal Banking Services.

The Government have committed £270 million of support over the next three years to start the implementation of the Performance and Innovation Unit's recommendations, all of which the Government accepted, for modernisation of the post office network. The Government remain committed to maintenance of a nationwide network of post offices.

### Broadband Telecommunications

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what targets she has set for the percentage of the UK population able to gain access to broadband telecommunications by the end of this decade. [6495]

**Mr. Alexander:** The Government are committed to working to extend broadband networks across the UK. This commitment was backed up by the publication of an action plan 'UK online: the broadband future' which set out how the Government aim to facilitate the roll-out of broadband services across the country.

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the Government's plans to extend broadband telecommunications to rural areas throughout the UK. [6496]

**Mr. Alexander:** The Government are working to ensure that broadband services are available in all parts of the country. To this end we are developing a strategy together with all interested parties. The £30 million fund for Regional Development Agencies and the devolved Administrations is focused on extending broadband networks to those who are not offered access by the market, including in rural areas. The Countryside Agency also included broadband access and demand in its "healthchecks" on 100 market towns, while the devolved Administrations are carrying forward their own work on broadband in rural areas with our support and assistance.

In addition, we are examining the scope for aggregating public sector demand in order to speed up the roll-out of broadband services to individuals and businesses in rural and other areas that service providers currently see as uncommercial.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the likely impact of the European Commission's latest proposals on future PFI projects. [6616]

**Ms Hewitt:** The Commission's proposals for simplifying, clarifying and bringing up to date the EC procurement directives were tabled in July 2000. They are the subject of on-going discussions in the Council and the European Parliament. Real progress is being made and the Government consider it unlikely that the amended rules will have any adverse effects on the award of PFI contracts.

### Gas Imports

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many billion cubic metres of gas she expects to be imported by 2010; and if she will make a statement; [7360]

(2) when she expects the UK to become a net importer of gas; and if she will make a statement. [7359]

**Mr. Wilson:** The Department makes and publishes projections of UK gas supply and demand, for example in 'Energy Projections for the UK' published in November 2000 and in the annual "Brown Book". In DTI's submission to the current Performance and Innovation Unit Energy Review, projections of supply and demand consistent with these publications were presented which suggest that the UK could become a net importer of gas on an annual basis by 2005 or soon thereafter. There is,

though, uncertainty on both the supply and demand projections, not least since both can be affected by changes in energy prices. Most outside commentators are also currently forecasting net imports from around 2005–06. At times of high demand in the winter, the UK is already a net importer of gas, as it was before 1997.

Looking further ahead, to 2010, there is greater uncertainty, so it is possible only to speculate on a likely range of estimates for net imports in that year. Allowing for an effect on gas demand from the full Climate Change Programme announced in November 2000, and assuming production by then of at least some of the discovered gas reserves which are currently classified as possible and of some as-yet-undiscovered gas reserves, an import range of between 15 and 55 billion cubic metres is indicated.

### Gas Energy Provision

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the UK's energy she expects to be sourced from gas by 2020; and what by percentage the countries of origin of the gas will be. [7379]

**Mr. Wilson:** Future estimates of the proportion of gas in UK primary energy demand in 2020 are naturally subject to considerable uncertainty. My Department's paper, 'Energy Projections for the UK'[1], suggests that under a number of assumptions, including possible future economic growth and fossil fuel prices, gas will supply a little under 50 per cent. of primary energy demand in 2020.

It is anticipated that much of the UK's gas will, by then, be imported. With the commissioning of the Bacton-Zeebrugge interconnector in October 1998 and the opening of the Vesterled link with Norway in October 2001, the UK is an integral part of the European gas network. Further links are likely. Europe's indigenous production is expected to decline by 2020 but it is relatively well situated close to more than two thirds of the world's proven gas reserves. The UK's gas could come from a variety of sources with suppliers of pipeline gas likely to include Norway, Russia and countries in the Caspian Basin and North Africa. The share that comes from each in 2020 will be determined by commercial considerations and supply-demand pressures in Europe both before and at that time. It is also possible that the UK will again import Liquefied Natural Gas that could come from some of the above countries but also from more distant sources such as the Middle East, Nigeria and Trinidad and Tobago.

[1] EP68 The Stationery Office and www.dti.gov.uk/energy/ep68final.pdf

### Gas Supplies

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what plans he has to amend legislation to provide an incentive for *(a)* pipe laying and *(b)* gas supply companies to extend gas supplies to communities without a gas supply; [6255]

(2) what steps he proposes to take to extend gas supplies to communities, which have no supply; and if he will make a statement. [6256]

**Mr. Wilson** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Utilities Act 2000 sought to increase competition in connections by removing the limits on gas transporters operating in their limited licence areas, with a view to stimulating competition between transporters, promoting extension of the network and reducing connection costs. In August 2001, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) consulted on a proposal to amend the Gas Connections Regulations to allow for a recovery period of twenty years rather than five. This would be expected to reduce the incentive for householders to hold back on connecting to the gas supply, and therefore to increase initial take-up.

The Government's draft Fuel Poverty Strategy included a commitment to working with Ofgem to ensure that, wherever possible, the gas network provides the widest viable coverage and fullest viable capacity. A working group, whose membership includes representatives of Government, Ofgem, the industry and consumers, is taking this work forward with a view to producing an interim report this month. The Government will take a view on what action is appropriate once the group has reported.

### Intellectual Property Advisory Committee

**Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress she has made in appointing the new Intellectual Property Advisory Committee. [8318]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** I have appointed Mr. Ian Harvey, Chief Executive Officer of BTG plc, to chair the IP Advisory Committee. I have appointed the following as members of the Committee:

Diana Adie, former head of IP at the BBC

Professor Sue Birley, Director of Imperial College Entrepreneurship Centre

Richard Gallafent, patent attorney

Professor Paul Geroski, deputy-chair of the Competition Commission

Mandy Haberman, businesswoman and inventor

Roland Hill, consulting engineer, inventor and businessman

Paul Johnston, IP Manager at ICI Paints and ICI Group Trade Mark Counsel

Hilary Newiss, self-employed solicitor and IP consultant

David Perkins, solicitor and head of IP Europe at Clifford Chance

Tim Roberts, patent attorney, president of the Chartered Institute of Patent Agents, and former IP manager at Zeneca Seeds

Dr Sandy Thomas, director of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics

Professor David Vaver, director of Oxford University IP Research Centre.

Further details are available at the committee's website http://www.intellectual-property.gov.uk/ipac and in the press release announcing the membership, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### Low Pay Commission

**Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Low Pay Commission has been given its new terms of reference. [8319]

**Alan Johnson:** The Government have confirmed the permanent status of the Low Pay Commission (LPC) and will be providing it with full terms of reference for its next report in due course. In preparation for that, and as suggested by the LPC in its third report (Vol II), the

Government wish the LPC to set up a programme of longer term, strategic and rigorous research to inform future work.

In particular, the Government wish the LPC to commission research which will investigate the impact of the minimum wage, over time, on employment and joblessness levels of various age groups. The Government also wish the LPC to find out more about the effect of the minimum wage on the supply of, and demand for, work-based training, and on the link between the minimum wage, education, training and skills development more generally.

The LPC has done a lot of useful work on the impact of the NMW on specific low paying sectors. The Government would like the LPC to use the longer timeframe now available to it to commission rolling research into the impact of the NMW, and the various increases to the rate, on business as a whole and on small businesses in particular, building on the work the LPC has already done on the various business strategies for coping with the minimum wage that have been adopted by such firms.

## Fuel Shortages

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what emergency measures have been put in place in the last 12 months to deal with fuel shortages brought about by industrial action. [7455]

**Mr. Wilson:** There have been no industrial disputes in the downstream oil sector in the past 12 months that have resulted in disruption to fuel supplies. The Energy Act 1976 confers powers which would allow the my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to ensure the continuity of essential fuel supplies in the event of a major disruption.

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment has been made of reserve petrol supplies since 11 September. [7456]

**Mr. Wilson:** Under legislation introduced after the oil crises of the 1970s, and the economic damage caused by the two oil price hikes, each European member state has an obligation to keep stocks of oil that can be made available in the event of any disruption to international oil supplies. As part of this obligation, the UK is required to hold stocks of oil products (including motor spirit) or crude oil equivalent equal to or above 67.5 days' worth of consumption at any one time. To ensure that the UK meets these obligations, my Department regularly monitors the levels of stocks of crude oil and oil products held in the UK. The latest data available are provisional data for stocks as at 31 August 2001, which show the UK as having 4.2 million tonnes of motor spirit (including a contribution from stocks of crude oil that will be refined into products), equal to 72 days' worth of consumption. This is considered to be more than adequate, especially given the level of our indigenous resources of crude oil, to meet the UK's needs or UK contribution to any international response to an oil supply shortage.

## Fishing (Iceland)

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what requests she has made to the Icelandic authorities for information regarding UK fishing vessels that may be entitled to compensation as former Icelandic waters trawlermen; and if she will make a statement. [7071]

**Nigel Griffiths:** I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson), on 20 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 599W.

## Mining Diseases

**Colin Burgon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many ex-miners in the Elmet constituency have been compensated for *(a)* respiratory diseases and *(b)* white finger vibration (i) in full and (ii) in part; and how many are waiting for compensation. [7055]

**Mr. Wilson:** To date, IRISC, the Department's claims handlers, advise me that, with regard to compensation for respiratory disease, there have been 485 claims registered in the Elmet constituency. 97 interim payments have been made and 53 claims have been settled in full.

In relation to vibration white finger, VWF, 444 claims have been initiated. There have been 87 interim payments and 66 claims have been settled by payment.

In total, the Department has paid out over £1.4 million in the Elmet constituency.

Details of compensation paid by constituency will soon be available on "www.dti.gov.uk/coalhealth".

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many claims for compensation have been made in respect of vibration white finger and chronic bronchitis and emphysema in *(a)* Nottinghamshire and *(b)* nationally; how many have been refused; how many have been settled; in how many cases interim payments have been made; and how many remain outstanding in each area since 1971. [7655]

**Mr. Wilson** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* With respect to respiratory disease, the following progress has been made:

| | *Nottinghamshire* | *Nationally* |
|---|---|---|
| Total number of claims | 20,706 | 164,527 |
| Total settlements | 1,585 | 14,965 |
| Number of interim payments | 3,679 | 36,002 |
| Number of denied claims | n/a | 3,456 |

In Nottinghamshire, some 15,938 claimants are progressing to the full medical assessment and, to date, the Department has received 7,000 claims packs from solicitors.

In relation to vibration white finger, VWF, the following progress has been made:

| | *Nottinghamshire* | *Nationally* |
|---|---|---|
| Total number of claims | 22,377 | 128,041 |
| Total settlements | 4,773 | 29,300 |
| Number of interim payments | 6,642 | 37,417 |
| Number of denied claims | n/a | 5,917 |

Further regional details are available on the Department's website www.dti.gov.uk/coalhealth.

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much compensation has been paid to claimants in *(a)* Nottinghamshire and *(b)* nationally in respect of (i) chronic bronchitis and emphysema and (ii) vibration white finger since 1971. [7656]

**Mr. Wilson** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* With regard to compensation for respiratory disease, £20.8 million has been paid in Nottinghamshire. Nationally, £203.4 million has been paid.

In relation to vibration white finger, VWF, £67.6 million has been paid in Nottinghamshire. Nationally, £368.3 million has been paid.

Further regional details are available on the Department's website www.dti.gov.uk/coalhealth.

### Kyoto Agreement

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessments she has made of the likely growth in fossil fuel use in *(a)* the USA and (b) developing nations over the next 20 years; what impact such growth will have on targets set at Kyoto; and what discussions she has had with her EU counterparts on the ratification of the Kyoto agreement by (i) EU member states, (ii) eastern European nations, (iii) Japan, (iv) Canada and (v) Russia. [6755]

**Mr. Wilson:** The Department has made no independent assessment of the likely growth in fossil fuel use over the next 20 years outside the UK. Assessments of future fossil and other energy uses are, however, undertaken by a number of organisations, including the International Energy Agency and the US Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration. These organisations typically produce annual reports covering such work.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has had no discussions with her EU counterparts on the ratification of the Kyoto Agreement as that issue is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. I understand that ratification of the Kyoto Protocol will be discussed at the Environment Council on 29 October.

### Nuclear Reprocessing

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what her policy is on future nuclear reprocessing capacity in the United Kingdom; what estimate she has for the volume of nuclear *(a)* storage and *(b)* reprocessing capacity that will be required over the next 30 years; how much of this capacity is currently available; how much additional capacity by type she estimates will need to be built in the United Kingdom; what estimate she has made of the (i) cost of such additional capacity and (ii) the amount of non-UK nuclear waste that will be (A) reprocessed and (B) stored in the United Kingdom over the next 30 years; and if she will make a statement. [6758]

**Mr. Wilson:** The Department has made no estimate of storage and reprocessing capacity as Government policy is that the decision to reprocess spent nuclear fuel or to seek alternative spent fuel management options is a matter for the commercial judgment of its owners, subject to meeting the necessary regulatory requirements.

Since 1976 reprocessing contracts with overseas customers have included a provision to return the resulting wastes back to the country of origin. Government policy remains that radioactive waste arising from overseas should not be stored in the UK. The amounts of overseas spent fuel reprocessed in the UK will depend on commercial arrangements between BNFL and its customers.

### Bilking

**Margaret Moran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions she has had with petrol companies on their contributions to the cost of prevention of bilking at petrol stations. [6301]

**Mr. Denham:** I have been asked to reply as I have responsibility for Crime Reduction.

We have not had direct discussion with petrol companies on their contributions to the cost of bilking at petrol stations, although officials have regular contact with the British Oil Industry Security Syndicate (BOSS) which is made up of representatives of petrol companies. BOSS has instigated the "Forecourt Watch" scheme which aims to reduce the types of crime that affect petrol station forecourts. There are 40 schemes currently operating across the United Kingdom and BOSS continues to develop new schemes in co-operation with local police services.

## TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

### A3 Hindhead Tunnel

**Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what implementation plan he has drawn up to *(a)* commence and *(b)* complete the A3 Hindhead tunnel; [7557]

(2) if he will make a statement on his policy on the environmental and economic implications of the proposed tunnel at Hindhead on the A3; [6474]

(3) what reports he has received from the Highways Agency concerning the A3 exhibition at Hindhead. [7556]

**Mr. Jamieson:** I have asked the Chief Executive of the Highways Agency, Tim Matthews to write to the right hon. Lady.

*Letter from David York to Virginia Bottomley, dated 16 October 2001:*

I have been asked by the Transport Minister, David Jamieson, to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the A3 Hindhead Tunnel. I am replying since Tim Matthews is currently abroad on Highways Agency business.

The environmental and economic implications of the proposed tunnel were assessed as part of the study completed earlier this year into possible charging for the tunnel. I attach a copy of the table summarising that assessment. As you will be aware, Ministers accepted the recommendations of the study and the scheme was added to the Government's Targeted Programme of Improvements last Spring.

The exhibition last month to remind local people about the scheme details was extremely successful and we received a considerable amount of useful feedback. The comments are now being considered and will be taken into account as the detailed design for the scheme is prepared. Our next step will be to appoint a contractor, next Summer, early in the planning process to help with that detailed design work. That work should lead to the start of the statutory procedures in 2003–04.

Subject to the outcome of those procedures, work could start on site in 2005–06 and take between three and four years to complete.

*Base Tunnel Option: (BTO) vs Do-Minimum*

*Dual two-lane all-purpose bypass (6.5 km) incl. bored tunnel (1.7 km)*

Problems: substantial delays and journey time variability on the A3 due to the traffic signals at Hindhead, the single carriageway sections either side and nearby junctions and accesses, also causing substantial amounts of "rat running" on local roads. Traffic flow 27,000 veh/day (9 per cent. HGVs).

Present Value Cost to Government: £75 million.

*A3 Hindhead—appraisal summary table January 2001*

| *Objective/Sub-objective/Qualitative impacts* | *Quantitative measure* | *Assessment* |
|---|---|---|
| ENVIRONMENT | | |
| *Noise* | | |
| With the Base Tunnel Option significant changes in traffic noise (3 dB[1]) predicted on some 35 km of the road network, in some cases including parts of Haslemere and Liphook as well as in Hindhead. The tunnel would reduce noise levels substantially for parts of Hindhead Common, but tranquillity on footpaths near the new road north of the tunnel would be lost | Base Tunnel vs Do Min. in 2023<br>Properties benefiting by 3 Db[1]:675<br>Properties dis-benefiting by 3 dB:115[1] | Net number of properties benefiting by 3 dB:560[1] |
| *Local Air Quality* | | |
| The assessment has been carried out for the road traffic model simulation area for links which would have a traffic flow of more than 5,000 veh/day (DETR, May 2000: Review and Assessment: Pollutant Specific Guidance, Part IV The Environment Act 1995, Local Air Quality Management LAQM.TG4(00)) | Properties where LAQ improves<br>$PM_{10}$ 1,567 $NO_2$ 715<br>Properties where LAQ worsens<br>$PM_{10}$ 801 $NO_2$ 652 | LAQ Index:<br>$PM_{10}$—249.7<br>$NO_2$—2,702.9 |
| *Greenhouse Gases* | | |
| The change in $CO_2$ is calculated over the whole road traffic model area and would be roughly equivalent to 0.012 per cent. of the total emissions of $CO_2$ by road transport in the UK in 1996 | n/a | +3,575 $CO_2$ tonnes/annum |
| *Landscape* | | |
| Slight beneficial impact on Surrey Hills AONB. Substantial benefits to landscape of the Common arising from inclusion of a bored tunnel and removal of the existing surface route would be, in part, off-set by substantial adverse effects outside tunnel at northern and southern ends of scheme | n/a | Slight beneficial |
| *Townscape* | | |
| Removal of congestion within Hindhead provides opportunity for townscape enhancement and redevelopment, including visitor 'gateway' to the Commons and Punch Bowl. These benefits would be off-set by adverse effect on southern approach to Hindhead; new route running parallel to existing A3 would create a wide road corridor with disturbance to existing mature properties | Three residential and four non-residential properties would be demolished | Moderate beneficial |
| *Heritage of Historic Resources* | | |
| No direct/indirect impacts on designated sites. Risk to unknown/undiscovered archaeology. Substantial benefit to historic landscape of the Common by removing existing surface route and re-establishing links with Punch Bowl, offset by adverse effects outside the tunnel | n/a | Slight beneficial |
| *Biodiversity* | | |
| No direct impact on the adjacent SSSIs/SPAs. Direct impact on areas of non-designated woodland and SNCI east of Hindhead, but avoiding main nature conservation interest. Beneficial indirect effects on Punch Bowl SSSI/SPA by removing existing surface route and reuniting commons | n/a | Intermediate positive |
| *Water Environment* | | |
| The scheme would cross two of the four streams within the corridor, one of which is of excellent quality (Begley) and the other (Nutcombe) of poor quality. Surface water measures would be needed to ensure there is no pollution risk. Existing data and boreholes indicate possible conflict between tunnel and ground water levels and underlying aquifer; without detailed modelling the impact cannot be determined, but there is a risk | n/a | (potentially) large adverse |

*A3 Hindhead—appraisal summary table January 2001*

| *Objective/Sub-objective/Qualitative impacts* | *Quantitative measure* | *Assessment* |
|---|---|---|
| *Physical Fitness*<br>Relatively few pedestrians currently cross the A3 in Hindhead (less than 200 a day). Reduced traffic severance in Hindhead resulting from the scheme may encourage more pedestrian and cyclist trips. Tunnel will reunite severed sections of the Common which is likely to encourage greater recreational use of the Common by pedestrians and cyclists. Dedicating existing sections of A3 to pedestrians and cyclists will also offer increased opportunities for walking and cycling | No data available on number of pedestrians and cyclists who will walk/cycle for more than, or less than, the 30 minutes a day health threshold | Slight beneficial |
| *Journey Ambience*<br>Large beneficial effect on driver stress. Large adverse effect on views from road. Slight beneficial effect with respect to traveller care (facilities) arising from the new dedicated footway/cycleway on sections of existing A3 | Over 25,000 road users a day affected | Slight beneficial |
| SAFETY<br>*Accidents*<br>Substantial reductions in numbers of accidents | Accidents reduced by 27 in 2009 rising to 34 in 2038. Thirty-year reduction 919 | PVB £13 million<br>17 per cent. of PVC |
| *Security*<br>N/a | n/a | n/a |
| ECONOMY<br>*Transport Economic Efficiency*<br>Positive NPV under both High and Low growth scenarios. Benefit/cost ratio higher than in the last study in the mid-1990s | BCR 1.6 | Users: NPV £108 million<br>Public providers: NPV £75 million<br>Other Government: NPV £13 million |
| *Reliability*<br>Moderate reduction in travel time variability from relieving bottleneck; would be larger but for traffic attracted (back) into the A3 corridor. Low-moderate flow | Current range of 12–32 minutes for peak period journey on Liphook-Milford section<br>of A3 would be reduced substantially | Slight beneficial |
| *Wider Economic Impacts*<br>This sub-objective is targeted at designated regeneration areas. Nevertheless, it is relevant that South Hampshire may benefit substantially from the improved transport connection. Also, the blighted part of Hindhead should recover when relieved of major traffic flows | n/a | (potentially) moderate beneficial |
| ACCESSIBILITY<br>*Option values*<br>Unlikely there would be substantial changes to the availability of transport services in the area | | n/a |
| *Severance*<br>Some relief from severance along the existing A3 from the signals (at A287) northwards, particularly around the Devil's Punch Bowl, and from the signals southwards to Crossways Road | | Moderate beneficial |
| *Access to the Transport System*<br>No change | | Neutral |
| INTEGRATION<br>*Transport Interchange*<br>No change | | Neutral |
| *Land-Use Policy*<br>Across the relevant national, regional and local policies (transport, environment, landscape, nature conservation, agriculture, cultural heritage, general development and recreation), there would be equal numbers of policies affected beneficially and adversely. There would, however, be more large positive effects than negative ones, and more of the more important policies would be affected positively. The two policies that would be affected most positively are: to provide an efficient and effective road system and to reduce congestion; and to conserve and enhance biodiversity. On balance the effect would be beneficial | Sixteen policies would benefit; 16 policies<br>would be adversely affected; five policies where<br>effects would be neutral.<br>All four most important policies would benefit. Ten of the 21 policies middle-ranked in<br>importance would benefit; eight would disbenefit | Beneficial |
| *Other Government Policies*<br>N/a | n/a | n/a |

[1] Greater than

## Aviation Industry

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what commitments have been given to UK airlines since 11 September about *(a)* insurance cover for terrorist risk, *(b)* compensation for compulsory grounding, *(c)* the reallocation of unused slots, *(d)* compensation for extra security, *(e)* the payment of passenger ticket taxation and *(f)* state assistance to offset financial losses; and what representations have been received in respect of each of the above. [8016]

**Mr. Jamieson** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The aviation industry has made a number of representations to the Government about the financial difficulties that it faces as a result of the downturn in passenger demand following the terrorist attacks on 11 September. The Government have taken action to provide temporary third party insurance cover for war and terrorism risk, but no commitments have been given in respect of any other requests. The European Commission has now produced guidelines on what financial assistance they might allow member states to provide to airlines, and these will be discussed at the Transport Council meeting on 16 October.

## London Underground

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will publish punctuality and reliability figures for each of the London Underground lines for each of the past five years. [7450]

**Mr. Jamieson:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Keith Hill) to the hon. Member for North Essex (Mr. Jenkin) on 27 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 423–25W. Full year figures for 2000–01 showing percentage of kilometres operated are now available and are shown in the table.

| | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| *Lines* | *2000–01* |
| Bakerloo | 82.6 |
| Central | 96.6 |
| Waterloo and City | 96.8 |
| Circle and Hammersmith | 81.8 |
| District | 92.9 |
| Jubilee | 89.2 |
| East London | 94.1 |
| Metropolitan | 95.0 |
| Northern | 96.5 |
| Piccadilly | 86.6 |
| Victoria | 95.8 |
| Total | 91.6 |

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what has been the total cost to Her Majesty's Government of the delay in the public-private partnership for London Underground; [7788]

(2) what has been the total cost to Her Majesty's Government of *(a)* consultants' fees and *(b)* legal expenses arising from the proposed PPP for London Underground. [7789]

**Mr. Jamieson:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Canning Town (Jim Fitzpatrick) on 10 May 2001, *Official Report*, column 256W. The Government will continue to provide six-monthly updates to Parliament on the cost of the consultancy work for the PPP and the restructuring of London Underground. The next report will also provide an assessment of the expected final outturn.

Any additional direct costs resulting from extensions to the timetable are largely in the form of additional consultancy costs. But the sooner the Tube modernisation plans can be put in place the sooner Londoners will benefit.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will publish the assessments of the costs of the proposed private-public partnership for London Underground, including reports from Deloittes and Parsons Brinckerhoff; and if he will make a statement. [6770]

**Mr. Jamieson** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Government's plans for a publicly run, privately built Tube will deliver around £13 billion of investment to improve the underground's infrastructure over the next 15 years. The Secretary of State has stated that these plans will go ahead only if they demonstrate value for money.

To assess whether this is the case, London Transport and its advisers are carrying out a thorough evaluation of the cost and value for money of bids. My Department is also commissioning Ernst and Young to carry out an independent review of London Transport's evaluation to ensure that it is completed on a fair and robust basis. Ernst and Young's review will be published, but not before London Transport has completed its negotiations with bidders.

The reports to which my hon. Friend refers from Deloittes and Touche and Parsons Brinckerhoff were produced for Transport for London.

## Railtrack

**Jeff Ennis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will give a breakdown of the money granted to Railtrack from public funds since the Hatfield disaster. [7940]

**Mr. Jamieson:** Between 17 October 2000 and 1 October 2001, no public money was paid direct to Railtrack, but its profitability during that period was contingent on public money. For example, in 2000–01, some 85 per cent. of Railtrack's £2,476 million income was paid to it in access charges by train operating companies, which were paid £847 million in Support for Passenger Services (SPRS) by the Franchising Director and the Strategic Rail Authority.

On 1 October 2001, Railtrack was paid £337 million of network grant, in accordance with the terms of the company's 2 April agreement with the Government; and the company, or its successor body, will be paid

£162 million of network grant in 2001–02 in respect of the (October 2000) final conclusions of the Rail Regulator's periodic review of access charges.

### PCV Drivers

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the number of PCV (passenger carrying vehicle) driving examiners; and what steps the Government are taking to reduce the impact on the recruitment by public and private operators of new PCV drivers. [6553]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The Driving Standards Agency has 327 driving examiners nationwide who are qualified to conduct PCV practical driving tests. In addition there are 68 examiners employed by bus and coach companies authorised to conduct PCV practical tests of drivers in those companies and a further 114 fire service and police examiners authorised to conduct practical PCV tests for drivers in their authorities.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is running a scheme for a faster service for applications for provisional bus driving licences in response to a request from the Confederation of Passenger Transport. The scheme was initially trialled by several companies nominated by the Confederation before being extended to all bus companies on 1 May 2001. DVLA will turn around applications made under the scheme within 48 hours of receipt and provide a faxed letter of entitlement to drive on the same day the application is processed.

### NATS

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what income the Government have received from the sale of National Air Traffic Services. [7844]

**Mr. Jamieson:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 886W.

### Training Directive

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what assessment he has made of the impact of the EU training directive on the road haulage industry; [7461]

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact of the EU training directive on the bus and coach industry. [7459]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The likely impact of the draft European Commission Directive proposing compulsory training for professional lorry and bus drivers was considered in our April 2001 Consultation Paper. This contained an initial Regulatory Impact Assessment that will be developed in the light of responses to the Consultation Paper. Copies of the Consultation Paper are available in House Libraries.

### Public Expenditure Review

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he will publish his Department's public expenditure review. [7465]

**Dr. Whitehead:** My Department publishes its public expenditure plans annually in its departmental annual report. A copy of the current report 'DETR Annual Report 2001, Cm 5105', is available in the Library of the House.

### Rail Safety

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what steps have been taken to improve rail safety since the publication of the second part of Lord Cullen's report. [7466]

**Mr. Jamieson:** We have asked the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) to ensure that the 74 recommendations in Lord Cullen's report are acted upon and to report progress within six months.

### Transport 10-Year Plan

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what reassessment will be made of public expenditure in the transport 10-year-plan to deal with the effects of terrorism. [7457]

**Mr. Jamieson:** We will consider, as part of the next spending review, the potential effects on departmental expenditure, including the transport 10-year-plan.

### Terminal 5

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he intends to make a statement on Heathrow terminal 5. [7468]

**Ms Keeble:** The decision on terminal 5 will be issued as soon as possible, consistent with full and careful consideration of the inquiry inspector's report. I cannot comment on any issues relating to T5 or the inspector's report while the decision is going through the relevant statutory procedures.

The Secretary of State is currently consulting on BAA's revised proposals for diverting two rivers which flow across the site (the "Twin Rivers"). We anticipate that the Twin Rivers consultation exercise will be completed by around the middle of October.

### General Election (Spoilt Ballot Papers)

**Ms Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many spoilt ballot papers there were, and what percentage they represent of the total number issued, in each parliamentary constituency, at the general election held on 7 June. [6650]

**Dr. Whitehead:** This information is being collected by the Electoral Commission who will publish it as part of a further report on the 2001 general election. We understand the report will be published next spring.

### Dunstable Bypass

**Mr. Selous:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will visit Dunstable in order to assess the need for a bypass. [6620]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The A5 Dunstable Eastern Bypass is one of three schemes that has specifically been remitted to the London to South Midlands Multi-Modal Study. The need for the bypass is being assessed by this study.

### Local Government Finance

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he intends to publish his proposals on the reform of local government finance. [1539]

**Dr. Whitehead** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Local Government White Paper due to be published later this year will set our financial reforms in the context of the wider modernisation agenda and will include a Daughter Document detailing our financial proposals.

### Birmingham Northern Relief Road

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what provision has been made for canal access in respect of the Birmingham northern relief road; and if he will make a statement. [6659]

**Ms Keeble:** The Birmingham northern relief road (BNRR) will go over the Birmingham Fazeley Canal at Curdworth and over the Wyrley Essington Canal at Burntwood and I can confirm that existing towpaths will be maintained alongside the canals through the bridges under BNRR.

### Abandoned Cars

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on his proposal to reduce the number of abandoned cars. [7293]

**Mr. Jamieson:** My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement shortly.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many complaints about Housing Benefit have been received from each local authority area by the local government ombudsman in each year since 1997. [7906]

**Dr. Whitehead:** This information is not held centrally. However, the table provides a breakdown of the number of complaints received about Housing Benefit in each of the three local government ombudsman areas between 1 April 1997 and 31 March 2001.

| *Year* | *Area A* | *Area B* | *Area C* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1997–98 | 725 | 206 | 216 | 1,147 |
| 1998–99 | 913 | 171 | 281 | 1,365 |
| 1999–2000 | 1,669 | 258 | 426 | 2,353 |
| 2000–01 | 2,704 | 356 | 968 | 4,028 |

To 31 March 2001, the local government ombudsman areas were: (A) incorporating local authorities in Greater London; (B) incorporating local authorities in southern England (except Greater London), East Anglia, the south-west and most of central England; (C) incorporating local authorities in Birmingham, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and the north of England.

### Polling Stations (Disabled Access)

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the accessibility of polling stations to disabled people in the general and local elections in June. [6509]

**Dr. Whitehead:** We have considered carefully the SCOPE report "Polls Apart 3" about the June 2001 general election. That report concluded that there had been some improvements on polling station accessibility, but that more needs to be done. In the light of this we will continue to work, with the Electoral Commission, to secure further improvements in polling station accessibility.

### Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi Modal Study

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he has received from individuals and organisations in Cambridgeshire about the recommendations of the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study. [6502]

**Ms Keeble:** Representations on the study report were invited by the regional planning body for the east of England, to whom the report was remitted. I understand that they received over 200 written representations and further views were elicited through stakeholder workshops. Some of the representations were copied to the Secretary of State.

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he expects to be able to make a decision on the recommendations of the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study. [6503]

**Ms Keeble:** The regional planning body for the east of England are examining the study report in the light of the emerging regional transport strategy. Once they have advised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on whether they support the recommendations in whole or in part, he will consider their advice and make an announcement.

### Coach Services (Huntingdon/London)

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to encourage the restoration of a coach service from Huntingdon to London. [6167]

**Ms Keeble:** Long-distance coach services are provided on a commercial basis and decisions on which services to run are primarily for operators. While I am aware of the recent withdrawal of a service by another operator, I understand National Express continue to provide a daily direct coach service between Huntingdon and London.

### Isle of Wight Council

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what grants have been paid to the Isle of Wight council for the years *(a)* 1999–2000, *(b)* 2000–01 and *(c)* 2001–02; and if he will indicate which are hypothecated for a particular purpose. [7957]

**Ms Keeble:** The information requested is given in the table. Figures are taken from statistical returns sent to my Department by the Isle of Wight Council.

£000

| | 1999–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|
| General grant | 77,614 | 83,135 | 88,412 |
| Grants ring fenced for a particular purpose: of which | 7,107 | 8,367 | 12,436 |
| Education grants | 2,181 | 4,228 | 7,039 |
| Social Services grants | 1,460 | 1,725 | 2,407 |
| Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services grants | 1,852 | 864 | 1,502 |
| Capital Finance grants | 1,614 | 1,550 | 1,488 |
| Total | 84,721 | 91,502 | 100,848 |

### English Partnerships

**Lawrie Quinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he proposes to review the future of English Partnerships. [8242]

**Ms Keeble:** I am today announcing a review to be undertaken by my Department, as to the future of English Partnerships. I have decided to bring forward the quinquennial review due in 2003 to ensure that the future of English Partnerships is given greater clarity and focus. The terms of reference for the whole review are set out as follows.

During the review we will be seeking the views of a wide range of interested organisations. We expect to complete the first stage of the review examining the role of English Partnerships by the end of this year. Subject to confirmation of their continued existence, we aim to complete the review of the structure and skills of the organisation by Easter, to ensure that English Partnerships can deliver their new role. I will publish the findings of the first stage of the review in the New Year.

The Terms of Reference for the review are as follows:

"To review the role of English Partnerships in delivering the Government's policies; to consider the future ownership of CNT assets and liabilities, and recommend such changes as might be necessary in the light of the review. To consider English Partnerships' structure and processes to ensure effective and efficient delivery of its remit".

## EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### Education SSA

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for each year since the area cost adjustment was introduced, what the standard spending assessment for each pupil was in *(a)* Bedfordshire, *(b)* Hertfordshire and *(c)* Cambridgeshire. [6106]

**Mr. Timms:** The table shows for 1998–99 to 2001–02 the education SSA per pupil for Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It is not possible to produce comparable figures for earlier years, because Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire were subject to local government reorganisation.

*Standard spending assessments (SSAs) per pupil in cash terms*

£

| | Bedfordshire | Hertfordshire | Cambridgeshire |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1998–99 | 2,463 | 2,554 | 2,369 |
| 1999–2000 | 2,566 | 2,659 | 2,485 |
| 2000–01 | 2,693 | 2,785 | 2,591 |
| 2001–02 | 2,841 | 2,933 | 2,697 |

### Free School Meals

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children in Huntingdon have school meals provided by the local authority. [6108]

**Mr. Timms:** There were 1,497 pupils on the returns of maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in Huntingdon parliamentary constituency to the 2001 annual schools' census recorded as having had a free school meal provided for them.

### Teachers' Pay Differentials

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to restore the pay differential between school teachers and lecturers in further education. [6109]

**Margaret Hodge:** It is for each college to agree annual pay rises and conditions of employment with its staff in the context of the overall resources available to them. We are, however, aware of the funding gap between schools and FE and have pledged to bring up levels of funding and allow upwards convergence over time.

This year alone an additional £527 million is available for FE, a 4 per cent. real terms increase on last year. Funding will increase again next year by a further 3 per cent. This compares with the period between 1993–94 and 1996–97 when FE funding per FTE student fell by 12 per cent. in real terms.

As part of the planned increases, we are investing £300 million in the Teaching Pay Initiative over the next three years to allow colleges, including sixth form colleges, to reward high quality teaching. This is separate to any general pay rise a teacher may receive.

### Education Provision (Huntingdon)

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many pupils in Huntingdon have not had an offer of a secondary school place for September. [6110]

**Mr. Timms:** Officials from Cambridgeshire education authority confirm that all pupils in Huntingdon have had an offer of a school place. Some children whose parents are unwilling to accept the place offered to them by the authority, and are pursuing an appeal, remain out of school.

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the class sizes were for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Huntingdon (i) on 31 March and (ii) in each year since 1996. [6161]

**Mr. Timms:** Information on class sizes in maintained primary and secondary schools is derived from returns made by schools to the Department in January each year on the annual schools' census.

The available information is shown in the table.

*Average class sizes[1] in maintained primary and secondary schools in Huntingdon parliamentary constituency*

| | Maintained primary | | | Maintained secondary | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *January each year* | *Number of classes* | *Number of pupils* | *Average class size* | *Number of classes* | *Number of pupils* | *Average class size* |
| 2001 | 352 | 9,698 | 27.6 | 323 | 7,148 | 22.1 |
| 2000 | 342 | 9,598 | 28.1 | 307 | 7,029 | 22.9 |
| 1999 | 344 | 9,964 | 29.0 | 312 | 6,723 | 21.5 |
| 1998 | 347 | 9,916 | 28.6 | 312 | 6,647 | 21.3 |
| 1997 | 353 | 9,918 | 28.1 | 308 | 6,563 | 21.3 |
| 1996 | 345 | 9,624 | 27.9 | 302 | 6,593 | 21.8 |

[1] Classes taught by one teacher

The latest class data were recently published in a statistical volume "Schools in England 2001" on 28 September, copies of which are available from the Library, or alternatively can be accessed from the Department for Education and Skills statistical website www.dfes.gov.uk/statistics

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many lecturer vacancies there were in further education in Huntingdon *(a)* on 31 March and *(b)* in each year since 1996. [6162]

**John Healey:** The information requested is not collected centrally. Information on staff numbers in FE, collected on the Staff Individualised Record (SIR) by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and latterly by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), does not include details of vacancies, leavers, salary or grade. However I understand that the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) has given an estimate of UK-wide vacancies for 1999–2000 in its publication "Skills foresight for Further Education in the United Kingdom (January 2000)".

The FEFC collected and published information on staff numbers in the FE sector on an annual basis. The responsibilities of the FEFC have now been taken over by the LSC.

## School Governors

**Dr. Murrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) how many governors have been appointed under the School Governors' One-Stop shop scheme since its inception; [6483]

(2) what the cost per governor placed is of the School Governors' One-Stop Shop scheme. [6482]

**Mr. Timms:** Since its inception in January 2000, the School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) has found 1,258 school governor candidates, of whom 435 are now serving governors and a further 126 are matched with schools and awaiting final placement. We expect all those recruited to be placed in due course. The cost per serving governor, placed through SGOSS, is currently £840.70. The cost per recruited governor is currently £290.70.

## Graduate Teacher Programme

**Mr. Blizzard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to increase the number of places available under the Graduate Teacher Programme. [6541]

**Mr. Timms:** The number of Graduate Teacher Programme places available has risen every year since the programme was introduced in January 1998. In the 2001–02 academic year, 2,250 fully funded places are being offered, over 700 more than last year. Each of these places attracts grants of up to £17,000.

I announced on 24 September that additional places would be made available in January 2002 with grants of up to £4,000 to cover training costs only. With demand for places on the Graduate Teacher Programme buoyant, these places are being offered in response to requests from head teachers who are willing to meet the salary costs of trainees from their schools' own budgets.

## Threshold Assessments

**Mr. Selous:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to reduce the administrative burden on headteachers of the threshold training and supervision of their staff. [6546]

**Mr. Timms:** Threshold assessment has enabled over 200,000 teachers in England and Wales to have their professional effectiveness confirmed and gain a substantial pay increase. The number of first-round applicants was exceptionally large and its successful implementation is a tribute to the professionalism of everyone involved, particularly head teachers. The number of second-round applicants will be much smaller, guidance and training materials have been improved and heads will be able to build on their first round experience. Accordingly, the second round of threshold assessment will be much less time consuming for heads than the first.

## New Opportunities Fund

**Mr. Selous:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to reduce the administrative burden on teachers and cost to schools of the New Opportunities Fund training. [6547]

**Mr. Timms:** The New Opportunities Fund ICT teacher training is being provided to ensure that serving teachers feel confident and are competent to teach using ICT within the curriculum. The effective use of ICT in the classroom will reduce rather than increase the burden on teachers, by equipping them to access and use a much wider range of teaching aids. The flexibility of the New Opportunities Fund programme minimises the cost to the school as the training budget itself is not charged to an individual school.

## School Funding (Havering)

**Angela Watkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what funding per pupil was provided to grant maintained schools in the London borough of Havering in the year immediately prior to the end of grant maintained status; and what funding per pupil these schools have received in the current financial year. [6549]

**Mr. Timms:** In the financial year 1998–99, the grant-maintained (GM) schools in the London borough of Havering, all of which were secondary schools, received recurrent funding from the former Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) amounting on average to £2,690 per pupil. For the financial year 2001–02, the most closely comparable figure currently available in respect of these schools is £3,120 per pupil. The figures have been calculated to the nearest £10 on the basis of pupil numbers from the annual schools' census for January 1998 and January 2001.

The calculations for 1998–99 are based on financial information supplied to the Department by FAS. The figures include annual maintenance grant together with special purpose grants for development, GNVQ, premises insurance, and the purchase of books, but not other special purpose grants or capital grants. Where the schools' annual maintenance grant included an element to compensate the schools for their inability to reclaim VAT, appropriate adjustments have been made to reflect this.

The calculations for 2001–02 are based on information from the budget statement published by the local education authority under section 52 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, supplemented and updated (in the case of specific grants) by information separately provided by the LEA. The figures include the schools' budget shares (including school standards grant), and standards fund resources devolved to the schools (but excluding capital grants, and other grants relating to school security and the National Grid for Learning).

In 1998–99, under arrangements specific to the GM sector, the GM schools in Havering received formula capital allocations from FAS amounting on average to £32 per pupil. Under the NDS devolved formula capital arrangements which apply to all schools, the Havering ex-GM schools' allocations for 2001–02 amount on average to £29 per pupil; these figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

## Veterinary Medicine

**Mr. Edwards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many places to study veterinary medicine will be available in England and Wales in *(a)* 2001, *(b)* 2005 and *(c)* 2010. [6557]

**Margaret Hodge:** We do not have forecasts of the number of veterinary science places for 2001, 2005 or 2010.

The current number of students (December 2000) is as follows:

| *Veterinary science students* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| *Postgraduate (PG)* | |
| Full-time | 200 |
| Part-time | 100 |
| *Undergraduate (UG)* | |
| Full-time | 2,100 |
| Part-time | 50 |
| Total | 2,500 |

*Note:*
Figures do not sum due to rounding. Figures are normally rounded to the nearest 1,000 students, but in this case have been rounded to the nearest 50, as figures are so small.
*Source:*
December 2000 HESA student record

Our public higher education student number projections only go as far ahead as 2002–03 at present. Furthermore, these projections do not contain a breakdown by type of course studied.

## Broadband Network

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to extend the broadband network to schools and universities; and over what time period. [6608]

**John Healey** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Government have allocated around £80 million between 2000–02 on providing schools with broadband access. The money is allocated through regional broadband consortia (RBCs) and local education authorities (LEAs), who have been commissioned to provide cost-effective and co-ordinated broadband internet connectivity at 2 Mbits or faster to 20 per cent. of schools in their region, including all secondary schools, by August 2002. The Government intend to increase the number of schools with a broadband connection beyond the current target of 20 per cent. of all schools in future years.

Universities have had a broadband network for many years, called the Joint Academic Network (JANET). The network not only connects all universities, but also all colleges of further and higher education, and research centres.

## Curriculum 2000

**Mr. Bacon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what guidance has been issued to universities about Curriculum 2000. [6641]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Last month, the Department, Universities and Colleges Admissions Service and partner organisations jointly published a revised edition of a booklet "Changes to Post-16 Qualifications" on Curriculum 2000 for higher education institutions. The booklet was distributed to all UCAS members' institutions and copies have been placed in the Library.

## Further Education

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* employment practices and *(b)* colleges there are in the further education sector; and what implications these figures have for consistency on pay rates for the same role. [6670]

**Margaret Hodge:** There are 428 colleges in the further education sector in England: the Department does not collect information on their employment practices.

Further education colleges are run by independent corporations, established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Each FE corporation is responsible for the pay and terms and conditions of its staff. There is no national pay agreement in the FE sector but there is a national recommended pay award determined by a joint union/employer negotiating forum.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what consideration she has given to nationally agreed pay scales in the further education sector. [6671]

**Margaret Hodge:** FE sector colleges are run by independent corporations, established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The terms and conditions of the staff that work in FE are a matter for the employers to determine, in discussion with the relevant unions. The Government play no part in these discussions but have encouraged employers and unions to discuss the scope for modernising pay and conditions under the FE Teaching Pay Initiative.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time staff there were in further education in each of the last five years. [6672]

**John Healey:** The information requested is contained in the table.

*Numbers of staff employed in the FE sector*

*England* *Thousands*

| *Year* | *Full-time* | *Part-time* | *Total staff* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1995–96 | 99.1 | 117.7 | 216.7 |
| 1996–97 | 96.3 | 121.8 | 218.1 |
| 1997–98 | 94.3 | 135.0 | 229.3 |
| 1998–99 | 93.8 | 137.0 | 230.8 |
| 1999–2000 | 95.0 | 134.9 | 229.9 |

[1] Numbers may not sum exactly due to rounding

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) collected and published information on staff in the FE sector on an annual basis. The responsibilities of the FEFC have now been taken over by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Information on staff is taken from the Staff Individualised Record (SIR), which covers teaching staff, staff who support teaching and learning and other support staff. The SIR covers FE sector colleges in England only.

SIR data for the whole year were collected from all colleges for the first time in July 1995, relating to the 1994–95 college year. This collection has been repeated annually since then; the latest data available are for 1999–2000.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many further education colleges were categorised by the FEFC as financially weak in each of the last three years. [6679]

**John Healey:** The numbers of further education colleges categorised by the FEFC as financially weak in each of the last three years are:

1998: 80 colleges

1999: 65 colleges

2000: 69 colleges.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assistance will be given to category C colleges to pay recommended pay awards in full. [6680]

**Margaret Hodge:** Pay and conditions are matters for college corporations to determine. The Learning and Skills Council will work closely with individual category C colleges—that is, those colleges that are financially weak—to produce action plans aimed at addressing the causes of the college's financial difficulties. We are determined to work with the LSC and the individual colleges to improve the quality of all colleges to the standard of the best. Where appropriate, and as part of the agreed action plan, the LSC is able to provide additional financial support and flexibility to colleges that are financially weak.

## Private Finance Initiative

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what her estimate is of the rate of returns of PFI contracts in schools in England and Wales. [6759]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The rate of return to a private sector contractor in a schools PFI contract is fixed as part of the annual payment made by a local education authority for delivery of the services specified in the contract, and as such is a matter between the local education authority and its private sector partner. All PFI contracts in schools have to demonstrate better value for money than traditional procurement.

PFI in schools in Wales is the responsibility of the National Assembly for Wales.

## Departmental Spending

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the total amount of spending by her Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of her Department's total spending this constitutes; and if she will make a statement. [6863]

**John Healey:** The Department for Education and Skills does not have responsibility for spending outside England except for higher education student support and its administration for students from Wales plus some small programmes. The table shows estimated programme spending by Government region in 1999–2000 by the then Department for Education and Employment on those programmes for education and skills which are now the responsibility of this Department. It does not include local authority expenditure on education and training funded from the education standard spending assessment. This is paid through the revenue support grant distributed by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.

*Central Government expenditure on education and skills programmes 1999–2000*

| *Region* | *£ billion*[1] | *Percentage*[2] |
|---|---|---|
| London | 2.2 | 17 |
| South East | 1.5 | 12 |
| South West | 1.4 | 10 |
| East | 1.6 | 12 |
| West Midlands | 1.5 | 11 |

*Central Government expenditure on education and skills programmes 1999–2000*

| Region | £ billion[1] | Percentage[2] |
|---|---|---|
| East Midlands | 1.1 | 8 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 1.3 | 10 |
| North East | 0.7 | 5 |
| North West | 1.9 | 14 |
| Total | 13.2 | 100 |

[1] Expenditure figures rounded to nearest £100 million

[2] Percentage figures may not appear to sum due to rounding

*Notes:*

1. Total excludes approximately £100 million expenditure in Wales on student loans, mandatory awards, student loan administration for higher education students from Wales

2. Total includes New Deal for Schools capital, the Children's Fund, Sure Start and Ofsted. Total also includes some smaller programmes of which the proportion allocated outside England is less than £20 million.

3. Total does not include annually managed expenditure—the vast majority of this is teachers' pensions, which also covers Wales.

*Source:*

Departmental Report 2001 and internal analysis

## Dyslexic Pupils

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what her estimate is of the number of primary school age children *(a)* who are dyslexic and *(b)* whose condition has been helped by special provision; and if she will make a statement. [6962]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

Since 1981, following the Warnock recommendation, information about pupils' special educational needs categorised by disability or learning difficulty has not been collected centrally. We are looking into the feasibility of collating such information. A pilot study was carried out in June and this is currently being evaluated.

If the pilot is successful—and subject to consideration of the burden on schools and LEAs—the new data collection arrangements will be introduced nationally from 2003 as part of the Department's new Common Basic Data Set (CBDS) arrangements.

## Correspondence

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what was, for each year since 1995, the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords; [7003]

(2) what was, for each year since 1995, the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by her Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if she will make a statement. [7004]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The effective handling of correspondence and parliamentary questions is an issue to which I, and ministerial colleagues, attach great importance.

General information on the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall and on overall performance is published by the Cabinet Office. Figures for 2000 were published on 6 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 324–28W and on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W.

Information on response times of parliamentary questions (PQs) for years prior to the 1998–99 parliamentary session is not held centrally.

The average response times for Commons and Lords written PQs could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the tables show the data that are readily available on PQ response rates.

| Session | 1998–99 | 1999–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Commons named day PQs answered:* | | | | |
| on the named day[1] | 714 | 532 | 235 | 183 |
| up to two days after | 124 | 172 | 129 | 41 |
| between three days and one week after | 68 | 167 | 129 | 16 |
| between one and four weeks after | 50 | 111 | 102 | 6 |
| between four weeks and three months after | 9 | 32 | 25 | 0 |
| over three months after | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 965 | 1,016 | 620 | 246 |

[1] In accordance with Standing Order 22(4) (usually three days from date of tabling)

| Session | 1998–99 | 1999–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Commons Ordinary Written PQs answered:* | | | | |
| within five days of tabling[1] | 703 | 588 | 185 | 184 |
| up to two days after | 200 | 107 | 91 | 8 |
| between three days and one week after | 165 | 210 | 125 | 11 |
| between one and four weeks after | 155 | 154 | 134 | 5 |
| between four weeks and three months after | 6 | 23 | 22 | 1 |
| over three months after | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 1,189 | 1,087 | 557 | 209 |

[1] In accordance with guidance on answering of Ordinary Written PQs set out in parliamentary paper HC 393 (1971–72)

| Session | 1998–99 | 1999–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Lords Written PQs answered:* | | | | |
| within 14 days of tabling[1] | 132 | 134 | 53 | 12 |
| up to two days after | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| between three days and one week after | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| between one and four weeks after | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| between four weeks and three months after | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| over three months after | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 132 | 134 | 60 | 12 |

[1] In accordance with section 4.108 of the Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords

### Religious Education

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make it a requirement to include teaching on the non-religious ethical life stance alongside the major faiths in multi-faith religious education; and if she will make a statement. [7129]

**Mr. Timms:** The Government have no plans to change the legislation on agreed syllabuses which, since it was introduced in 1988, has helped to contribute towards the rising standards in religious education in non-faith schools reported by Ofsted. Opportunities exist in religious education teaching for pupils to explore issues within and across faiths thereby learning to understand and respect different religions, beliefs, values and traditions (including ethical life stances), and their influence on individuals, societies, communities and cultures.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will extend Government guidelines on multi-faith religious education in community schools to all maintained religious schools. [7128]

**Mr. Timms:** Extending the guidelines in the way my hon. Friend suggests would undermine the purpose and ethos of faith schools. Religious education in these schools will continue to be taught in accordance with the trust deed or in accordance with the tenets of the religion in question.

### Special Educational Needs

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children in each of the last five years were excluded from sitting SATS because they were *(a)* statemented for special educational needs or *(b)* in the process of being assessed for special educational needs. [7257]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The national curriculum test and teacher assessments are designed to allow as many pupils as possible to have access to them. There may, however, be a small number of pupils who are unable to take part in some or all of the assessments. In such instances the national curriculum and/or the tests and teacher assessments may be disapplied for a particular pupil. Pupils may be disapplied through a statement of special educational needs or because they are awaiting an assessment of special educational needs. However, there may be other circumstances where it is necessary to disapply pupils temporarily (for example, pupils recently arrived from a different educational system who require a period of adjustment).

The national curriculum test and teacher assessment results information collected for disapplied pupils includes the total number of pupils disapplied in each subject at each key stage. This information does not differentiate between pupils with statements of special educational needs, those in the process of being assessed or between long term and temporary disapplication.

The following table provides information on the total number of pupils disapplied in each subject at Key Stages 1–3 in each of the last five years (1996–2001). Figures rounded to the nearest hundred.

| | Key Stage 1 | | | Key Stage 2 | | | Key Stage 3 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Reading | Writing | Maths | English | Maths | Science | English | Maths | Science |
| 1997 | 2,600 | 2,600 | 2,500 | 1,900 | 1,700 | 1,700 | 1,200 | 800 | 1,000 |
| 1998 | 2,500 | 2,600 | 2,500 | 2,800 | 2,500 | 2,400 | 1,700 | 1,100 | 1,300 |
| 1999 | 2,500 | 2,500 | 2,400 | 2,300 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 1,400 | 1,700 |
| 2000 | 2,400 | 2,500 | 2,400 | 2,800 | 2,500 | 2,400 | 3,600 | 1,400 | 1,700 |
| 2001 | 2,500 | 2,600 | 2,500 | 3,400 | 2,900 | 2,800 | 3,300 | 1,700 | 2,000 |

### AS-Levels

**Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when she will publish further details of the revised arrangements for AS-level examinations and assessment in the academic year. [7261]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** On Wednesday 12 September 2001 the Secretary of State announced the new changes to the AS examination timetable and assessment as part of the review of the A-level reforms. The Joint Council for General Qualifications (JCGQ) sent information about the changes to all schools and colleges on 12 September. Information on the arrangements can also be found on awarding bodies' and Joint Council's websites. The Joint Council will issue more detailed information on 17 October.

### Literacy and Numeracy Targets

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what her Department's targets are for literacy

and numeracy levels at age 11 in each of the next five years; and what steps she proposes to take if those targets are not reached. [7280]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The targets for 2002 are for 80 per cent. of 11-year-olds to achieve the expected standard in literacy and 75 per cent. in numeracy. We are currently consulting schools on raising these targets to 85 per cent. in both English and maths for 2004. We are not at present proposing targets beyond 2004. We are confident that these challenging targets can be achieved.

### Emotional Intelligence

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make the development of emotional intelligence part of the national curriculum; and if she will make a statement. [7298]

**Mr. Timms:** The development of emotional intelligence is already covered in the National Curriculum as part of the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) framework. The framework has been in place since September 2000 for pupils aged five to 16 and was introduced to support the personal and social development of young people in today's complex and changing world. PSHE enables pupils to develop their self-esteem, confidence and well being. It also helps pupils to appreciate the effect of their actions on their own lives and the lives of others, and to understand the limits and codes of personal and social behaviour. Good PSHE in schools supports parents in helping their children to develop the ability to make informed, healthy and responsible decisions about their lives.

The National Healthy School Standard (NHSS), which was launched in October 1999, has as one of its specific themes 'Emotional Health and Well-being', which includes awareness of mental health issues. The Standard is delivered as an integral part of the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) framework in schools.

### School Exclusions

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many exclusions from schools relating to drug-related incidents there were in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Staffordshire in the last three years. [7343]

**Mr. Timms:** The information requested on drug related exclusions in respect of England is not collected centrally.

The latest permanent exclusions data were published on 19 July in a Statistical First Release 'Permanent Exclusions from Schools, England 1999–2000 (final)', copies of which are available from the Library, or alternatively can be accessed from the Department for Education and Skills statistical website www.dfes.gov.uk/statistics.

Exclusions in Scotland and Wales are a devolved matter and therefore matters for the Scottish Executive and National Assembly for Wales respectively.

### Neighbourhood Support Fund

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment has been made of the results of the Neighbourhood Support Fund. [7381]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The first of the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) projects went live in spring 2000. The 653 community based projects have worked with almost 17,000 of the hardest to help young people. Recent evaluation of the programme by an independent research organisation shows that one third of leavers had moved on to education, training or employment with training. A further one in 10 had gone on to a local programme, including the Learning Gateway or the New Deal.

The next phase of the evaluation will draw on the experiences and perceptions of the young people participating in the projects. This will help to inform future strategies for engaging the hardest to help young people.

The stage 2 report will be published in the spring.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to extend the Neighbourhood Support Fund; and if she will make a statement. [7382]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** A total of £60 million was made available to the Neighbourhood Support Fund spread over three years. The current programme comes to an end in September 2003 and Ministers have yet to decide whether NSF will extend beyond this date, and if so in what form. Any future levels of funding will be addressed and agreed as part of the Year 2002 Spending Review.

The current NSF projects are due to finish in September 2003. I am considering the future shape, design and delivery of NSF and where it sits in the context of the Connexions Service.

### Morning-after Pill

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list the maintained schools in which the morning-after pill is dispensed to pupils. [7484]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* This information is not held centrally.

The incidence of the morning-after pill being dispensed in maintained schools is low. We would not normally expect school nurses to issue contraception or emergency contraception. In the few cases where they have done, this should be made clear in the school's sex and relationship education policy, which has to be agreed with parents. These arrangements should not proceed until parents have been consulted.

### Examination Results

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what percentage of 15 year old pupils achieved five or more *(a)* grade A*—A at GCSE/GNVQ in (i) comprehensive schools, (ii) grammar schools and (iii) secondary modern schools and *(b)* grades A*—B at GCSE/GNVQ in (i) comprehensive schools, (ii) grammar schools and (iii) secondary modern schools. [7498]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* In 1999–2000 the percentage of 15 year old pupils who achieved five or more *(a)* grade A*—A at GCSE/GNVQ in (i) comprehensive schools, (ii) selective schools and

(iii) secondary modern schools and *(b)* grades A*—B at GCSE/GNVQ in (i) comprehensive schools, (ii) selective schools and (iii) secondary modern schools was:

*Percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving 5 or more grades:*

| | *(a) A*—A* | *(b) A*—B* |
|---|---|---|
| Comprehensive schools | 8.3 | 22.7 |
| Selective schools | 47.9 | 82.6 |
| Secondary modern schools | 2.1 | 10.6 |
| England | 11.8 | 27.1 |

### Bullying

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will publish statistics on homophobic and racist bullying within *(a)* schools and *(b)* colleges; and if she will make a statement. [7642]

**Mr. Timms:** Bullying can put the emotional well-being and educational achievement of young people at risk. All schools should treat bullying seriously and take steps to combat it whenever and wherever it occurs. From September 1999 head teachers of maintained schools have been under a duty to draw up measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils, including racist or homophobic bullying.

Further education colleges are not under a legal duty to prevent bullying or harassment but most do draw up policies in this area. Students who experience problems can usually receive counselling or pastoral help.

We do not have reliable statistics on the incidence of bullying in schools and are not aware that such data exist for colleges. Our role is mainly to provide advice to schools on how to prevent bullying and deal with any which occurs.

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on the Government's strategy to deal with homophobic and racist bullying within schools and colleges. [7643]

**Mr. Timms:** Bullying can put the emotional well-being and educational achievement of young people at risk. All schools should treat bullying seriously and take steps to combat it whenever and wherever it occurs. From September 1999 head teachers of maintained schools have been under a duty to draw up measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils, including racist or homophobic bullying.

Last December we launched a new anti-bullying strategy, comprising among other things a new pack for schools and accompanying video aimed at pupils. There is also a new anti-bullying website at www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying. The pack provides detailed advice on tackling bullying because of race or sexual orientation (the latter for the first time). It also mentions that heads can permanently exclude pupils responsible for persistent or violent bullying. The key message of our strategy is that victims should report bullying to someone they trust and not suffer in silence.

We have recently provided a short foreword to 'Safe for All: a best practice guide to prevent homophobic bullying in secondary schools' published by Stonewall.

Further education colleges are not under a legal duty to prevent bullying or harassment but most do draw up policies in this area. Students who experience problems can usually receive counselling or pastoral help.

### Teacher Shortages (Surrey)

**Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of teacher shortages in Surrey; which are the shortage subjects and age groups; what steps she has taken to tackle teacher shortages in Surrey; and what the average sum per school is *(a)* in Surrey and *(b)* nationally allocated by her Department to deal with this. [7703]

**Mr. Timms:** The Department collects statistics on teacher vacancies annually. In January this year the vacancy rate in Surrey was 1.4 per cent. compared with a rate of 1.3 per cent. in England as a whole. Officials have maintained regular contact with Surrey local education authority over recent months and I am pleased to be able to report that schools in Surrey are operating normally. Recruitment is more difficult in secondary schools, particularly in the shortage subject areas of mathematics, science, English, modern languages or technology. The Government have put in place a range of measures such as training bursaries, "Golden Hellos" and the welcome back bonus to boost teacher recruitment. We have provided £33 million in funding to be devolved to schools to put in place local recruitment and retention initiatives. Surrey received £650,000 from the recruitment and retention fund. Ninety per cent. of this was targeted at secondary schools giving an average of around £11,000 per secondary school in Surrey. In England the average allocation was around £9,000 per secondary school. The fund was targeted at areas of greatest need and not all schools will have received an allocation.

### Golden Jubilee

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans her Department has to distribute *(a)* coins and *(b)* other commemorative items to school children to mark the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty The Queen. [8035]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* We have no plans to distribute coins or other commemorative items to school children. However, my Department is planning a range of innovative projects to mark Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee, such as a national poetry competition, which we announced jointly with Buckingham Palace on 4 October. Further announcements will be made in due course.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Police Complaints Authority

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will announce new appointments to the Police Complaints Authority. [8320]

**Mr. Denham:** I have appointed five new full-time members to the Police Complaints Authority. Their appointments will be for three years. The five new members are as follows.

| Name | Start date | Previous position |
|---|---|---|
| Jeniffer Rogers | 3 September 2001 | Mental Health Act Commissioner, Mental Health Review Tribunal, ICIS (Independent Consultants in Health and Social Services) Associate |
| Nicola Williams | 3 September 2001 | Barrister |
| Elaine Rassaby (part-time) | 3 September 2001 | Mental Health Act Commissioner, OFSTED Complaints Adjudicator, Member of Criminal Injuries Compensation Panel |
| Sally Hawkins (part-time) | 3 September 2001 | Freelance writer and broadcaster, council ombudsman, Director of Banking Codes Standards Board, Non-Executive Director of University College Hospital Lewisham, Justice of the Police. |
| Ann Barker | 3 December 2001 | Historian, Member of the Parole Board. Justice of the Peace. |

## Drug-related Crime

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support he has given to Cambridgeshire constabulary to tackle drug-related crime. [6169]

**Mr. Denham:** The following allocations have been made by the Home Office to support the Cambridgeshire constabulary in tackling drug related crime:

| | *Arrest Referral Schemes* | *Initiative Communities Against Drugs Initiative* |
|---|---|---|
| 2000–01 | 106,800 | [1]— |
| 2001–02 | 216,480 | [2]643,700 |

[1] Initiative commenced 2001–02

[2] Although this sum was allocated to the two Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Partnerships (£446,800 and £196,900 to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough respectively), the police are major stakeholders in the initiative, which is aimed at tackling drug related crime within local communities

In addition, as members of the local Crime and Disorder Partnerships and Drug Action Teams, the Cambridgeshire constabulary has access to other forms of Home Office funding for projects and initiatives which contribute, either directly or indirectly, to reducing drug-related crime.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of criminal offences were drug-related in the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [7294]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** It is difficult to calculate a single percentage figure reflecting precisely what proportion of all crimes is drug-related since no statistical data are collected on offences that may have been committed due to drug taking. However, information is collected on the number of drug offences. Details of the number of persons convicted of or cautioned for drug offences and as a proportion of persons convicted of or cautioned for all indictable offences in England and Wales during the period 1995–99 are given in the table.

| | *Drug offences* | *All indictable offences* | *Drug offences as a percentage of all indictable offences* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1995 | 88,463 | 504,800 | 17.5 |
| 1996 | 88,920 | 491,400 | 18.1 |
| 1997 | 105,214 | 509,400 | 20.7 |
| 1998 | 120,776 | 533,500 | 22.6 |
| 1999 | 111,377 | 512,600 | 21.7 |

*Source:*
Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate

## Huntingdon Life Sciences

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to visit Huntingdon Life Sciences. [6170]

**Mr. Blunkett:** I have no plans at present to visit Huntingdon Life Sciences. My predecessor visited on 26 April. Since becoming Home Secretary I have held a number of discussions aimed at ensuring businesses and individuals involved in important scientific research where animal experimentation is necessary can safely carry on their work without impediment from those who try to intimidate or obstruct them.

## Asylum Seekers

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants for asylum, broken down by country of origin, have had their applications refused in the last four years; and how many are known *(a)* to have left the United Kingdom and *(b)* to have remained within the United Kingdom. [7118]

**Angela Eagle:** Data on initial decisions on asylum applications refused asylum or exceptional leave to remain, by nationality, for 2000 are given in the table. This does not include details of appeals outcomes or of asylum seekers who are subsequently given leave to remain on other grounds.

Information on the numbers of asylum seekers removed from the United Kingdom, by nationality, is not currently available. The total numbers of known removals in each of the last four years, excluding dependants, are given in the table:

*Initial decisions made on applications received: Refusals[1,2,3] of asylum and exceptional leave, excluding dependants, by nationality, 1997 to 2000*

*Number of refusals of principal applicants*

| *Nationality* | *1997* | *1998* | *1999[4]* | *2000[5,6]* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Europe* | | | | |
| Albania | 175 | 260 | 175 | 1,875 |
| Czech Republic | 210 | 180 | 275 | 1,775 |
| FRY | 380 | 565 | 460 | 13,830 |
| Poland | 860 | 1,070 | 520 | 1,765 |
| Romania | 635 | 1,155 | 345 | 2,695 |
| Russia | 65 | 85 | 55 | 900 |
| Turkey | 1,475 | 1,015 | 290 | 2,090 |
| Ukraine | 190 | 430 | 80 | 1,045 |
| Other Former USSR | 545 | 1,260 | 465 | 3,285 |
| Other Former Yugoslavia | 170 | 140 | 180 | 1,280 |
| Other | 1,325 | 1,095 | 220 | 605 |
| Total | 6,030 | 7,260 | 3,065 | 31,145 |

*Initial decisions made on applications received: Refusals[1,2,3] of asylum and exceptional leave, excluding dependants, by nationality, 1997 to 2000*

*Number of refusals of principal applicants*

| *Nationality* | *1997* | *1998* | *1999[4]* | *2000[5,6]* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Americas* | | | | |
| Colombia | 380 | 810 | 155 | 1,775 |
| Ecuador | 740 | 1,000 | 135 | 650 |
| Other | 265 | 95 | 60 | 470 |
| Total | 1,385 | 1,905 | 350 | 2,900 |
| *Africa* | | | | |
| Algeria | 655 | 180 | 160 | 1,330 |
| Angola | 535 | 90 | 35 | 425 |
| Democratic Republic of Congo | 255 | 110 | 50 | 990 |
| Ethiopia | 185 | 60 | 35 | 355 |
| Gambia | 430 | 165 | 15 | 30 |
| Ghana | 1,330 | 425 | 130 | 225 |
| Ivory Coast | 175 | 285 | 75 | 265 |
| Kenya | 980 | 630 | 495 | 785 |
| Nigeria | 4,315 | 1,840 | 780 | 770 |
| Rwanda | 15 | 35 | 150 | 440 |
| Sierra Leone | 380 | 525 | 120 | 480 |
| Somalia | 305 | 100 | 120 | 2,365 |
| Sudan | 205 | 65 | 50 | 395 |
| Tanzania | 485 | 140 | 30 | 60 |
| Uganda | 525 | 120 | 55 | 480 |
| Zimbabwe | 115 | 45 | 105 | 525 |
| Other | 845 | 640 | 465 | 1,860 |
| Total | 11,740 | 5,465 | 2,875 | 11,780 |
| *Middle east* | | | | |
| Iran | 170 | 125 | 75 | 2,815 |
| Iraq | 110 | 90 | 100 | 2,220 |
| Other | 260 | 135 | 110 | 945 |
| Total | 540 | 350 | 285 | 5,975 |
| *Asia* | | | | |
| Afghanistan | 75 | 65 | 90 | 1,515 |
| Bangladesh | 555 | 275 | 375 | 870 |
| China | 1,380 | 1,500 | 200 | 5,480 |
| India | 2,395 | 1,450 | 750 | 2,125 |
| Pakistan | 2,870 | 1,950 | 990 | 3,720 |
| Sri Lanka | 1,710 | 1,950 | 1,945 | 6,875 |
| Other | 240 | 145 | 70 | 1,015 |
| Total | 9,225 | 7,335 | 4,415 | 21,600 |
| Other, and nationality not known | 20 | * | 40 | 2,280 |
| Grand total | 28,945 | 22,315 | 11,025 | 75,680 |

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5 with * = 1 or 2

[2] Information is of initial determination decisions excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions

[3] Includes refusals on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country and non-compliance refusals, for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period: see explanatory note 6

[4] Exclude cases where an application has been refused under the backlog criteria

[5] May include some cases where an application has been refused under the backlog criteria

[6] Provisional figures

**Mr. Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have been housed in cluster areas in Essex by the National Asylum Support Service in the last 12 months; and what support is being provided to community groups and public services in these areas. [6282]

**Angela Eagle:** To date the National Asylum Support Service has not established any cluster areas in Essex.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the most recent information he has concerning the detention of asylum seekers under immigration law; and how many were detained, broken down by *(a)* location, *(b)* number of applicants detained and *(c)* number of appellants detained. [7282]

**Angela Eagle** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The latest available information on the number of asylum seekers detained under Immigration Act powers by place of detention relates to 30 June 2001 and is given in the table. Information on the stage of asylum application is not available and could be obtained only by examining individual case files at disproportionate cost.

*Detained asylum seekers[1] as at 30 June 2001[2]*

| *Location* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Belmarsh | 40 |
| Brixton | 10 |
| Campsfield House | 180 |
| Cardiff | 40 |
| Dover Harbour | 5 |
| Harmondsworth | 65 |
| Haslar | 145 |
| High Down | 40 |
| Holme House | 55 |
| Lindholme | 95 |
| Liverpool | 70 |
| Longport | 10 |
| Manchester Airport | 10 |
| Rochester | 160 |
| Tinsley House | 105 |
| Wandsworth | 50 |
| Winchester | 35 |
| Wormwood Scrubs | 20 |
| Other prison establishments[3] | 120 |
| Oakington Reception Centre | 265 |
| Total | 1,515 |

[1] Persons detained under Immigration Act powers who are recorded as having sought asylum at some point.

[2] Figures rounded to the nearest five, and exclude persons detained in police cells. Figures include 135 persons who are recorded as being detained under dual immigration and other powers.

[3] Other prison establishments with five or fewer detainees.

## Trenchard House

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to consult the local community before putting on the market the police accommodation at Trenchard House, London. [4812]

**Mr. Denham:** The decision to sell Trenchard House rests with the Metropolitan Police Authority. The Chair of the Authority informs me that the Authority has received a number of representations which it is considering.

## Occupational Health (Police)

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on occupational health in the police force. [5411]

**Mr. Denham:** The Government are currently working on the development of a national occupational health strategy, locally delivered, for the police service. This will be aimed at reducing sickness absence through improved human resources policy, sickness management and the

provision of services. An improved occupational health service will enable forces to bring down the rate of sickness absence, and variations between forces, through supportive measures for officers.

### Policing (North Wales)

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last received a report on policing in North Wales from the Chief Constable of North Wales Police. [5616]

**Mr. Denham:** Under section 44 (4) of the Police Act 1996, every Chief Constable is required, as soon as possible after the end of the financial year to submit to the Home Secretary a general report on policing during that year of the area for which his or her force is maintained. The Chief Constable of North Wales Police and the North Wales Police Authority produced a joint annual report for 2000-01 which was submitted to the Home Office in mid-August.

### Prisons

**Mr. Stinchcombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in each prison establishment are held *(a)* two to a cell in a single cell and *(b)* three to a cell in a double cell. [5409]

**Beverley Hughes:** The table shows the number of prisoners in each prison establishment held two to a cell designed for one and total overcrowding at the end of August 2001. Data are provisional and subject to validation by prisons.

'Doubling' is a Prison Service indicator. The target is for doubling to be at or below 18 per cent. The rate of doubling for the year to April 2001 is 16 per cent.

The Prison Service does not collect centrally the number of prisoners held three in a double cell. Prisons report the total overcrowding level, which includes prisoners held three to a cell for two and those overcrowded in dormitories and larger cells.

| *Prison name* | *Two to a cell designed for one* | *Total overcrowding* |
|---|---|---|
| Acklington | 0 | 0 |
| Albany | 0 | 0 |
| Altcourse | 820 | 820 |
| Ashfield | 0 | 0 |
| Ashwell | 0 | 0 |
| Askham Grange | 0 | 0 |
| Aylesbury | 0 | 0 |
| Bedford | 130 | 130 |
| Belmarsh | 0 | 306 |
| Birmingham | 254 | 254 |
| Blakenhurst | 96 | 96 |
| Blantyre House | 0 | 0 |
| Blundeston | 0 | 0 |
| Brinsford | 72 | 72 |
| Bristol | 82 | 82 |
| Brixton | 238 | 238 |
| Brockhill | 0 | 0 |
| Buckley Hall | 56 | 56 |
| Bullingdon | 76 | 285 |
| Bullwood Hall | 0 | 0 |
| Camp Hill | 222 | 222 |
| Canterbury | 198 | 198 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 0 |
| Castington | 0 | 0 |
| Channings Wood | 16 | 16 |
| Chelmsford | 28 | 28 |
| Coldingley | 0 | 0 |
| Cookham Wood | 58 | 58 |
| Dartmoor | 0 | 0 |
| Deerbolt | 0 | 0 |
| Doncaster | 580 | 580 |
| Dorchester | 148 | 148 |
| Dovegate | 0 | 0 |
| Dover | 0 | 0 |
| Downview | 32 | 32 |
| Drake Hall | 0 | 0 |
| Durham | 328 | 328 |
| East Sutton Park | 0 | 0 |
| Eastwood Park | 56 | 56 |
| Elmley | 228 | 228 |
| Erlestoke | 0 | 0 |
| Everthorpe | 64 | 64 |
| Exeter | 352 | 352 |
| Featherstone | 0 | 0 |
| Feltham | 0 | 0 |
| Ford | 0 | 0 |
| Forest Bank | 0 | 0 |
| Foston Hall | 0 | 0 |
| Frankland | 0 | 0 |
| Full Sutton | 0 | 0 |
| Garth | 0 | 0 |
| Gartree | 0 | 0 |
| Glen Parva | 404 | 404 |
| Gloucester | 156 | 156 |
| Grendon | 0 | 0 |
| Guys Marsh | 54 | 54 |
| Haslar | 0 | 0 |
| Hatfield | 0 | 0 |
| Haverigg | 0 | 0 |
| Hewell Grange | 0 | 0 |
| High Down | 0 | 186 |
| Highpoint | 0 | 0 |
| Hindley | 0 | 0 |
| Hollesley Bay | 0 | 0 |
| Holloway | 0 | 0 |
| Holme House | 136 | 136 |
| Hull | 0 | 0 |
| Huntercombe | 0 | 0 |
| Kingston | 0 | 0 |
| Kirkham | 0 | 0 |
| Kirklevington | 0 | 0 |
| Lancaster | 0 | 0 |
| Lancaster Farms | 24 | 24 |
| Latchmere House | 0 | 0 |
| Leeds | 834 | 834 |
| Leicester | 248 | 248 |
| Lewes | 34 | 34 |
| Leyhill | 0 | 0 |
| Lincoln | 304 | 304 |
| Lindholme | 0 | 0 |
| Littlehey | 0 | 0 |
| Liverpool | 442 | 442 |
| Long Lartin | 0 | 0 |
| Low Newton | 66 | 66 |
| Lowdham Grange | 0 | 0 |
| Maidstone | 0 | 0 |
| Manchester | 474 | 474 |
| Moorland | 34 | 34 |
| Morton Hall | 0 | 0 |
| Mount | 40 | 80 |
| New Hall | 56 | 56 |
| North Sea Camp | 0 | 0 |
| Northallerton | 144 | 206 |
| Norwich | 372 | 372 |
| Nottingham | 228 | 228 |
| Onley | 0 | 0 |
| Parc | 0 | 0 |

| Prison name | Two to a cell designed for one | Total overcrowding |
|---|---|---|
| Parkhurst | 6 | 6 |
| Pentonville | 388 | 388 |
| Portland | 6 | 6 |
| Preston | 548 | 548 |
| Ranby | 76 | 76 |
| Reading | 146 | 146 |
| Risley | 36 | 36 |
| Rochester | 0 | 0 |
| Rye Hill | 0 | 0 |
| Send | 0 | 0 |
| Shepton Mallet | 6 | 6 |
| Shrewsbury | 290 | 290 |
| Stafford | 0 | 0 |
| Standford Hill | 0 | 0 |
| Stocken | 52 | 52 |
| Stoke Heath | 0 | 0 |
| Styal | 56 | 56 |
| Sudbury | 0 | 0 |
| Swaleside | 0 | 0 |
| Swansea | 0 | 0 |
| Swinfen Hall | 0 | 0 |
| Thorn Cross | 0 | 0 |
| Usk | 180 | 180 |
| Verne | 26 | 26 |
| Wakefield | 0 | 0 |
| Wandsworth | 472 | 472 |
| Wayland | 36 | 36 |
| Wealstun | 0 | 0 |
| Weare | 0 | 0 |
| Wellingborough | 0 | 0 |
| Werrington | 0 | 0 |
| Wetherby | 0 | 0 |
| Whatton | 0 | 0 |
| Whitemoor | 0 | 0 |
| Winchester | 318 | 318 |
| Wolds | 0 | 0 |
| Woodhill | 126 | 126 |
| Wormwood Scrubs | 30 | 30 |
| Wymott | 0 | 0 |

### Forged Passports

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the action taken by his Department on matters relating to a forged passport reported under the reference HQ/PC/01620000675 on 23 December 2000. [5636]

**Angela Eagle:** I am pleased to be able to inform the hon. Member that the passport in question has been recovered by the Immigration Service. Inquiries into the matter are continuing and I understand that the Chief Executive of the Passport Service will shortly be writing to the hon. Member with further details.

### Football Clubs (Police Charges)

**Mr. Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police charges paid by each London professional football club in seasons 1999–2000 and 2000–01. [5902]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* The information requested has been provided by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and is set out in the table.

£

| Football Club | Amount paid in 1999–2000[1] | Amount paid in 2000–2001[1] |
|---|---|---|
| Arsenal | 259,106.66 | 308,703.58 |
| Barnet | 6,290.76 | 20,086.74 |
| Brentford | 55,730.44 | 48,410.74 |
| Charlton | 41,472.83 | 55,599.87 |
| Chelsea | 221,335.28 | 173,981.73 |
| Crystal Palace (2000) | — | 115,347.80 |
| Crystal Palace | 189,361.87 | 82,435.38 |
| Fulham | 112,275.54 | 80,530.23 |
| Leyton Orient | 55,135.22 | 34,956.92 |
| Millwall | 46,188.49 | 76,023.56 |
| Queens Park Rangers | 74,814.51 | 64,142.21 |
| Tottenham | 243,266.63 | 231,822.84 |
| West Ham | 184,794.52 | 193,492.31 |
| Wimbledon | 171,640.12 | 149,169.39 |
| Total | 1,661,412.87 | 1,616,703.30 |

[1] Financial years

### Essex Police

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from Essex police regarding his proposals to reform police pay and conditions. [6220]

**Mr. Denham:** In the context of the police reform programme, I have received representations from the Association of Police Authorities (APA) and from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) regarding possible changes to police pay and conditions of service. The Essex police authority is a member of the APA. The Chief constable of Essex is a member of ACPO.

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the projected number of serving constables is in the Essex police force for *(a)* 2001–02 and *(b)* 2002–03. [6213]

**Mr. Denham:** Essex police have informed me that they expect to have 2,345 constables on 31 March 2002 and 2,497 constables on 31 March 2003.

### Crime Survey

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of people aged 60 years or over reported, in the most recent national crime survey, that their lives are greatly affected by fear of crime. [5957]

**Mr. Denham:** Results from the last British Crime Survey (2000) estimated that 10 per cent. of people aged 60 and above reported that their quality of life was greatly affected because of their fear of crime.

Comparing results elicited from the most recent British Crime Survey with those from the previous sweep (1998), shows that the percentage of those aged 60 or over that reported that their fear of crime as greatly affected their quality of life has not changed.

These results were reported in "Opportunity for all. One year on: making a difference. Second annual report 2000" (Cm 4865). This has been deposited in the Library.

### Community Sentencing

**Stephen Hesford:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has collated on the likely effect of community sentences on rates of re-offending; and if he will make a statement. [6054]

**Mr. Keith Bradley:** Analysis of reconviction rates for different disposals shows that reconviction after community sentences does not differ greatly from that after other sentences once the underlying population characteristics have been taken into account. In recent years reconviction rates after community sentences have stayed fairly constant. However, there is a broad consensus in the research literature that some specific interventions are effective in reducing further offending, typically achieving around a 10-percentage point reduction in reconviction rates. A review of what works can be found in Home Office Research Study 187 'Reducing offending an assessment of research evidence on ways of dealing with offending behaviour'.

Five principles have been found to be key to effective work with offenders:

1. More intensive programmes need to be targeted at high risk offenders.
2. Programmes should focus on factors affecting criminal behaviour eg anti social attitudes, drug dependency, low levels of educational and vocational skills, poor cognitive and inter-personal skills.
3. Programmes need to be properly carried out by trained staff and not deviate from their aims and objectives.
4. Active, participatory styles of delivery are more effective than unstructured or overly didactic methods.
5. The most effective types of interventions are skills-based and are designed to improve problem-solving and social interaction.

The National Probation Service is developing new approaches to working with offenders based on research and the principles outlined above in its pathfinder programmes.

Evidence about the effectiveness of these approaches in reducing offending is beginning to emerge but it takes time to obtain reconviction results. The main measure—reconviction rates two years after release from prison or completion of order—is typically only available some three years after the offender has been on the programme. Therefore evidence is only becoming available in 2001 for offenders who started programmes in 1998. Annexe A summarises the currently available evidence, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

### Victims of Crime

**Mr. Boris Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to bring forward legislation relating to the rights of victims of crime; and if he will make a statement. [6101]

**Mr. Denham:** The Government are fully committed to meeting the needs of victims of crime and to introducing a Bill of Rights as promised in their manifesto. In February 2001, a consultation paper was issued to review the Victim's Charter, in which comments were invited on the introduction of statutory rights for victims. The consultation period ended on 15 June and a summary of responses was placed in the Library in July.

Further detailed work is currently being carried out on victims' rights and the other possible new developments outlined in the consultation paper. I will make a further statement as soon as I am in a position to do so.

### Police Housing

**Mr. Boris Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision the Government have made for long-term police housing in rural areas; and if he will make a statement. [6098]

**Mr. Denham:** It is a matter for individual Police Authorities to determine the number and location of police houses in their force area.

Under the Government's Starter Home Initiative nearly 900 police officers/police civilians, of whom 340 are outside the Metropolitan Police Service and the City of London, will benefit from £230 million allocated to 95 schemes to help them buy their first home. The forces that will benefit from the scheme are set out in the table.

| *Force* | *Number of homes for police officers/police civilians* |
|---|---|
| Metropolitan and City | 552 |
| Thames Valley | 171 |
| Hampshire | 48 |
| Sussex | 25 |
| Surrey | 24 |
| Cambridgeshire | 25 |
| Hertfordshire | 47 |

A further 220 police officers are expected to benefit from a £20 million scheme to provide interest free equity loans of £10,000. This will be available in housing hotspots outside London.

### Thames Valley Police

**Mr. Boris Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many working hours were lost by Thames Valley police due to sick leave in the last year for which figures are available. [6103]

**Mr. Denham:** Information is not collected centrally in the form requested. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary records police sickness in days. In 2000–01, Thames Valley police lost 53,659 days due to sick leave, an average of 14.3 days per officer.

**Mr. Boris Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many constables are available for ordinary duty in Henley; and how many there were in 1997. [6102]

**Mr. Denham:** I am told by the Chief Constable that Henley has 21.3 full-time equivalent constables. Thames Valley police is unable to make a direct comparison with 1997 because of territorial boundary changes. Henley is now a rural sector of the Southern Oxfordshire Division. In 1997 it was an outstation of Reading.

### Bradford (Disorder)

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the cost to West Yorkshire police of payments to other police forces for assistance in policing the recent disorders in

Bradford; what plans he has to pay an additional grant to the West Yorkshire police; and if he will make a statement. [5967]

**Mr. Denham:** I am told by the Chief Constable that the cost of mutual aid provided by other forces to West Yorkshire police for the policing of the disorders in Bradford is estimated at £1 million.

West Yorkshire Police Authority has not formally asked for additional financial assistance. I will carefully consider any request from the police authority in accordance with the criteria for applications for special grant in exceptional circumstances which we have established in consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Police Authorities.

### A40M (Census)

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will evaluate the effectiveness of using police resources to stop car drivers on Westbourne Terrace off the A40M on 16 July, to undertake a census; and if he will make a statement. [5996]

**Mr. Denham:** The survey of drivers on Westbourne Terrace on 16 July was one of a programme of similar surveys undertaken by Transport for London as part of the 2001 London Area Transport Survey. To conduct such surveys it is necessary to stop the vehicles passing the survey point and only police officers have the general power to do this. The cost of police involvement in such surveys is borne by the survey sponsors.

The Government recognise that police involvement in such surveys may not be seen as the most effective use of police resources. We are looking at this issue, and others, within the context of the police reform programme, through which we aim to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the police.

### Under-age Drinking

**Ms Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he will bring forward to reduce the incidence of under-age drinking and associated nuisance in public places. [6231]

**Mr. Denham:** The Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997 provides a power for the police to confiscate alcohol from young people under 18 who are drinking in public places and who are creating disorder or causing nuisance. In addition, the law relating to the sale or purchase of alcohol to or for young people has been strengthened through the Licensing (Young Persons) Act 2000, whether the intention is to consume the alcohol on licensed premises or elsewhere. The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 will further strengthen the law by placing a positive duty on licensees and their staff not to sell to any person unless they are certain of age.

Reducing under-age drinking and the problems associated with this are key objectives of the Home Office action plan on alcohol-related crime and disorder.

### Alcohol-related Violence

**Ms Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he will take to enable the police to deal more effectively with alcohol-related violence and disorderly behaviour. [6230]

**Mr. Denham:** In addition to broader measures to tackle violent crime and disorder, we are implementing the programme set out in the Home Office action plan on alcohol-related crime and disorder. This focuses on reducing under-age drinking, public drunkenness and alcohol-related violent crime. Specific measures, given legislative effect through the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001, include new powers for local authorities to restrict antisocial drinking in specified public areas, with increased police powers of arrest and a power to confiscate alcohol; new powers for the police to order the immediate closure of licensed premises for up to 24 hours where there is disorder or disturbance; strengthening of the law relating to the sale of alcohol to those under 18; and a widening of the existing offence of permitting drunkenness or other violent or disorderly conduct on licensed premises.

### Departmental Contracts

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the top 10 companies to which his Department contracted out their construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6420]

**Mr. Blunkett:** The top 10 companies by value of contracts awarded (excluding Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects which are contracted with special purpose PFI vehicles) with which the Home Office has contracted for construction and refurbishment works in the last 12 months are in alphabetical order:

Amey Asset Services Limited
Balfour Beatty
Caledonian Building Systems
Carillion plc
Henry Boot Construction UK Limited
How Engineering Services
John Mowlem Construction plc
Mansell plc
Tilbury Douglas Construction Limited
Wates Construction Limited.

### Treason Felony Act

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that the Treason Felony Act 1848 is used to prosecute those contravening it. [5889]

**Mr. Keith Bradley:** Where any offence is alleged, it is for the police to decide whether and how it should be investigated, and whether to initiate a prosecution. It will be for the Crown Prosecution Service to decide whether it is appropriate for such a prosecution to be continued.

### Police (Racial Fairness)

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent reports he has received from the police inspectorate on racial fairness in the police services. [7152]

**Mr. Denham:** Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has carried out three thematic inspections looking at community and race relations issues and the progress the police service is making in

this area since 1997, as well as a review of murder investigation and community and race relations issues in the Metropolitan Police Service.

The reports are as follows:

Winning the Race—Policing Plural Communities (1997)

Winning the Race—Policing Plural Communities. Revisited (1999)

Winning the Race—Embracing Diversity (2001)

Policing London—Winning Consent (2000).

In addition HMIC carries out regular inspections of individual forces, and as part of this process will consider how these forces are progressing on community and race relations issues.

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the extent of fair treatment on the basis of race in police employment; and if he will make a statement. [6762]

**Mr. Denham:** A top priority for the Government is to ensure that the police service is more representative of the communities it seeks to serve and that it should reflect and be strengthened by the full diversity of society. The Home Secretary has published targets for the recruitment, retention and progression of minority ethnic police officers in "Dismantling Barriers". As part of the assessment of forces' progress in meeting those targets, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary inspected all forces in England and Wales. Their inspection report "Winning the Race—Embracing Diversity" published in January 2001 concluded that the great majority of forces were progressing satisfactorily, or exhibiting good practice, in minority ethnic employment.

## Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of his Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7239]

**Mr. Blunkett:** Information on the normal retirement age and on compulsory early retirement or severance for my Department and for the executive agencies and public sector bodies for which my Department is responsible is as follows.

The normal retirement age for non-industrial staff is 60, and for industrial staff 65. However, the age retirement policy for grades between Administrative Assistant and Executive Officer (including equivalent grades, except certain Prison Service specific grades) has been temporarily relaxed. Staff in these categories who would normally retire at age 60 can choose to stay on until 31 March 2002, subject to health and efficiency considerations. Staff at Higher Executive Officer level and above can also apply for extensions of service subject to business needs, but the expectation is that they would normally retire on reaching the age of 60.

A variation to this policy is applied in the Prison Service where pre "fresh-start" Prison Officers employed before 1987 retire at age 55, and Operational Support Grades retire at 65.

The compulsory early retirement or severance procedures followed in the Home Office are subject to the conditions set out in paragraphs 11.5 and 11.6 of the Civil Service Management Code. As a pre-redundancy measure, Departments and agencies may call for volunteers to leave on compulsory terms to avoid compulsory redundancy procedures. Staff may also be retired on compulsory early retirement or severance terms on grounds of structure, and on early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency. Early retirement applies to staff aged 50 or over, early severance applies to staff aged under 50.

The Home Office's age retirement policy is currently under review.

## Ministerial Travel

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement; [6928]

(2) if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement. [6927]

**Mr. Blunkett:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 823W.

## London Weighting

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the total annual value of London weightings and London living allowances for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [6854]

**Mr. Blunkett:** The estimated total value of London weightings and London living allowances for the Home Department (including Agencies) is £38,270,000. These allowances are not consolidated into pay.

## Youth Custody Orders (Wirral)

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many youth custody orders have been issued in each of the last four years in each of the four constituencies on the Wirral. [6358]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The available information, taken from the Home Office Court Proceedings Database, is shown in the table.

Information collected centrally does not permit a distinction between the four Wirral constituencies to be made and figures for the Wirral magistrates court (which covers all four constituencies) have been given. Crown court figures have also been included where the committing court was Wirral.

The sentence of youth custody was replaced by detention in a young offender institution by the Criminal Justice Act 1988. The table however contains all forms of immediate custody imposed on offenders under 21 years of age during the years requested.

*Persons under 21 sentenced to immediate custody in the Wirral Petty Sessional Area*

| Year | Sec. 53 C and YPA 1933 | Young offender institution | Secure training order | Total immediate custody |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1996 | 4 | 120 | — | 124 |
| 1997 | 1 | 133 | — | 134 |
| 1998 | 2 | 96 | 1 | 99 |
| 1999 | 4 | 105 | 2 | 111 |

Data for 2000 are not yet available.

### Violent Offences

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further information he has collated on violence *(a)* against women by men and *(b)* by women against men in addition to that contained in the British Crime Survey; and if he will publish these findings. [6627]

**Mr. Denham:** There are various sources of information about various forms of interpersonal violence.

The statistics on crimes recorded by the police do not routinely collate information on victims and offender characteristics. Some additional detail was provided in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 12/01.

The "Homicide Index" stores information on victims and suspects of homicide. This information is published in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1999", CM 5001, which has been deposited in the Library. This publication also contains information on rape and other sexual offences.

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit have collated some police force information on cases of robbery in the year 2000. This information includes gender of offenders and victims and will be published in due course.

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit are to produce a report on male rape using police force data. Information from the British Crime Survey will also feed into this report. This is planned for publication in 2002.

In 2000 the Policing and Reducing Crime Unit published a series of Briefing Notes on "What Works" in reducing domestic violence.

The Serious Crimes Analysis Section, within the National Crime Faculty, have collected a wide range of information about serious sexual offences, murder and abductions. This information is used for operational support of major police investigations in relation to the apprehension of perpetrators. It is not published.

Information relating to women and contact with all aspects of the criminal justice system is given in a 'Section 95' publication—"Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System, 2000". This is updated annually by the Home Office. The information on violent victimisation of women comes from sources already mentioned—police recorded crime statistics and the Homicide Index. Estimates from the British Crime Survey are also included.

The Performance and Strategic Management Unit are preparing 'Toolkits' on Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences. These are designed to bring together information from public and voluntary sector organisations on all aspects of crime reduction strategy and best practice. These are due to be published later in the autumn of this year.

### Community Safety Partnership (Wiltshire)

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the members of the Board of the community safety partnership for Wiltshire, *(b)* the executive teams and their functions and *(c)* the themes addressed in the current year. [5861]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Information is not held centrally on the membership of crime and disorder reduction partnerships, also commonly referred to as community safety partnerships, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In Wiltshire, the county council works closely with the four district-based community safety partnerships in the county who have responsibility for developing and implementing individual crime and disorder reduction strategies for their areas. The first strategies were published in March 1999 for the period 1999–2002. The next three-year strategies are due for publication by the end of March 2002. Crime and disorder reduction partnerships play an important role in tackling crime locally, ensuring a joined-up approach to crime prevention and community safety.

### Antisocial Behaviour Orders

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* antisocial behaviour orders and *(b)* curfew orders have been made in (i) Salisbury district and (ii) Wiltshire since the statutory commencement of the schemes. [5862]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The number of antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) being applied for and issued is collected centrally by Magistrates Courts Committee (MCC) area only. We have no record of any such orders being made in the Wiltshire MCC between April 1999 and June 2001.

No applications have been received from local authorities or the police to establish child curfew schemes under section 14 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended by sections 48 and 49 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001. These amendments extended the upper age limit to 15 and allow the police, as well as local authorities, to initiate schemes. These changes were implemented on 1 August 2001.

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* antisocial behaviour orders and *(b)* curfew orders have been made in (i) Worthing borough, (ii) Adur district and (iii) Sussex since the statutory commencement of the schemes. [7611]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The number of antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) being applied for and issued is collected centrally by Magistrates Courts Committee (MCC) area only. Between

April 1999 and June 2001, four antisocial behaviour orders were applied for and issued in the Sussex MCC area.

No applications have been received from local authorities or the police to establish child curfew schemes under section 14 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended by sections 48 and 49 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001. These amendments extended the upper age limit to 15 and allow the police, as well as local authorities, to initiate schemes. These changes were implemented on 1 August 2001.

### Police Cells

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many cells in police stations have been closed in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement; [6559]

(2) how many police stations *(a)* have custody facilities and *(b)* have no such facilities; and if he will make a statement. [6612]

**Mr. Denham:** It is an operational decision for the Chief Constable to determine the number of custody facilities/police cells required by his/her force. Information about the number of police stations with custody suites and the number of cell closures in each of the last three years is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Crime (North Yorkshire)

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the increase in crime north of York in recent months; and if he will make a statement. [7154]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The most recently published recorded crime statistics show that in the 12 months to March 2001 total crime in the North Yorkshire police force area fell by 3.7 per cent. compared with a 2.5 per cent. fall in England and Wales. Figures for individual Basic Command Units are also available in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 12/01 'Recorded Crime', published on 19 July 2001, copies of which are available in the Library.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Child Support Agency

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the number of those persons gaining and losing from the introduction of new child support mechanisms from 2002. [7270]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Based on an assessment made in 1998,[1] had cases transferred to the reformed scheme at that time, around 65 per cent. of non-resident parents in work would have seen a reduction in their child support liability while 35 per cent. would have seen an increase. However, only around one half of non-resident parents paying through the CSA pay all that is currently due, so a simple comparison of potential liabilities is therefore misleading. Increased compliance will mean that more of the maintenance due will actually be paid. The child support reforms have been introduced to ensure that more children see the benefit of maintenance and over one million children will gain.

[1] New scheme maintenance modelled on August 1998 5 per cent. scan of Child Support Computer System. Caseloads calibrated to forecast 'A' day levels.

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what target he has set for the accuracy of *(a)* maintenance assessment, *(b)* maintenance assessment debts and *(c)* full maintenance balances calculated by the Child Support Agency for 2001–02. [7263]

**Malcolm Wicks:** My right hon. Friend has set the following target for the accuracy of maintenance assessments calculated by the Child Support Agency for 2001–02:

"Accuracy on the last action for all assessments checked in the year to be correct to the nearest penny in at least 78 per cent. of cases".

No targets are set for the accuracy of maintenance assessment debts and full maintenance balances.

**Dr. Stoate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what percentage of non-resident parents who make child maintenance contributions to the Child Support Agency chose to terminate their employment within 12 months of their initial assessment in the last 12 months. [7587]

**Malcolm Wicks:** For the 12 months ending 30 September 2001, 9 per cent. of employed non-resident parents making child maintenance contributions to the Child Support Agency moved out of employment within 12 months of their initial assessment. No breakdown of the reasons for non-resident parents' change of employment status is available.

### Means-tested Benefits

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will provide a breakdown of how many people were in receipt of means-tested benefits and tax credits for each year since May 1997. [7787]

**Malcolm Wicks:** The information is in the table.

*Thousand*

| | *May 1997* | *May 1998* | *May 1999* | *May 2000* | *May [1]2001* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income Support | 3,958 | 3,853 | 3,814 | 3,811 | 3,928 |
| Jobseeker's Allowance—income-based | 1,225 | 1,027 | 948 | 824 | 701 |
| Housing Benefit | 4,640 | 4,475 | 4,313 | 4,033 | 3,863 |
| Council Tax Benefit | 5,500 | 5,326 | 5,166 | 4,830 | 4,657 |
| Family Credit/Working Families Tax Credit | 748 | 767 | 791 | 1,024 | 1,214 |
| Disability Working Allowance/Disabled Persons Tax Credit | 13 | 15 | 17 | 23 | 27 |

[1] The 2001 count for Disabled Persons Tax Credit was taken in April not May 2001.

*Notes:*
1. For Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Family Credit/Working Families Tax Credit, figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample and are therefore subject to a degree of sampling error. Other data are taken from 100 per cent. counts.
2. Figures are for Great Britain and are rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. Some people may be entitled to more than one means-tested benefit. A large proportion of people receiving Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, may also be receiving one of the other means-tested benefits/tax credits. Figures cannot therefore be added together to produce a total.
4. The data refer to benefit units, which may be a single person or a couple.
5. The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit totals for Great Britain include estimates for local authorities that have not responded. These estimates are based on historical and regional data. This type of estimate is standard practice in reporting totals where there have been non-respondents.
6. Council Tax Benefit totals exclude any Second Adult Rebate cases.
7. Housing Benefit figures exclude any Extended Payment cases.

*Source:*
Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiries, May 1997 to May 2001
Jobseeker's Allowance Quarterly Statistical Enquiries, May 1997 to May 2001
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Management Information System Quarterly 100 per cent. caseload stock-count taken in May of each year from 1997
Family Credit/Working Families Tax Credit, May 1997 to May 2001
Disability Working Allowance/Disabled Person Tax Credit May 1997 to May 2001

## Benefit Take-up

**Mr. Webb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of non-take-up of Income Support among the over-60s, for *(a)* those under 75 and *(b)* those over 75. [8049]

**Mr. McCartney:** The latest available figures on the number of people entitled to the Minimum Income Guarantee are included in the publication "Take-Up of Income Related Benefits: Statistics for 1999–2000", copies of which are available in the Library.

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the uptake was in *(a)* the UK, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales in (i) 1996–97, (ii) 1997–98, (iii) 1998–99, (iv) 1999–2000 and (v) 2001–01 of (A) Child Benefit, (B) Housing Benefit, (C) Council Tax Benefit, (D) Family Credit and (E) the Working Families Tax Credit expressed as a percentage of those eligible; and if he will make a statement. [6734]

**Malcolm Wicks:** The available information is published in the annual statistics on "Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-Up", copies of which are in the Library. These estimates are for Great Britain.

It is not possible to produce reliable estimates for different parts of Great Britain. Information on benefit take-up is derived from the Family Resources Survey (FRS).

No statistics are published for Child Benefit; however it is believed that on average 98 per cent. of families take up their entitlement to Child Benefit.

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what representations he has received regarding the impact of the proposed incapacity benefits reforms on the Scottish Executive's anti-poverty initiative; [7068]

(2) what representations he has received from the Scottish Executive about increasing levels of benefit take-up. [7069]

**Malcolm Wicks:** We are in regular contact with the Scottish Executive on a wide range of issues. Both the Government and the Scottish Executive are committed to reducing poverty and we work in close partnership in this area. Changes to social security legislation are, of course, a reserved matter for the UK Parliament.

## State Retirement Age

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on the Government's plans for changing the state retirement age. [6507]

**Mr. McCartney:** The Pensions Act 1995 equalised state pension age for men and women from a future date. Women's state pension age will be increased gradually from 60 to 65 between the years 2010 and 2020. State pension age will be equalised at 65 for both men and women from 6 April 2020.

## New Deal (Huntingdon)

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in Huntingdon are in the New Deal programme; and how many were placed in employment up to June. [6165]

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** At the end of June 2001, 238 people in Huntingdon were participating in the New Deal for Young People, New Deal 25+, New Deal 50+ and New Deal for Lone Parents and 466 had been placed in employment.

## Incapacity Benefit

**Andrew George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what consultation process was followed in regard to the insurance industry of the Social Security (Incapacity Benefit) Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations issued on 22 November 2000; [6742]

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact of the Social Security (Incapacity Benefit) Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations issued on 22 November 2000 on the disability pensions paid by employers and their insurers. [6745]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Copies of the regulations were sent in draft to a range of organisations including the Association of British Insurers and the National Association of Pension Funds for their comment.

A Regulatory Impact Assessment of the measures in the Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999 was published on 21 May 1999. The Social Security (Incapacity Benefit)

Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations 2000 ensure that all the commitments made during the passage of the Act are met.

### Pension Funds

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the timetable is for the phased abolition of the minimum funding requirement applicable to pension funds. [7998]

**Mr. McCartney:** On 7 March 2001 the Government announced their proposals to replace the minimum funding requirement (MFR) with a long-term scheme specific funding standard, with additional measures to strengthen security. Our proposals offer better protection that provides more effective security for scheme members without damaging consequences for investment.

On 18 September 2001 we published "The Minimum Funding Requirement: The Next Stage of Reform". This document seeks views on the workability of draft regulations that introduce changes to the current MFR regime in advance of its replacement. The consultation period ends on 10 December 2001, and we plan to introduce these changes early next year.

Implementing our proposals to replace the MFR in full will require primary legislation, and in the meantime we are working with the pensions industry and other interested parties to develop proposals for legislation when parliamentary time becomes available.

## TREASURY

### Climate Change Levy

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the projected cost is to *(a)* UK and *(b)* Scottish industry of implementation of the climate change levy over the next three years. [6501]

**Mr. Boateng:** The climate change levy will raise an estimated £1 billion in its first year, all of which will be recycled back to business through national insurance contribution cuts and support for energy efficiency. While the levy is broadly revenue neutral, it is not possible to say at this stage what the effects on any specific country, sector or industry will be. That will depend on a number of factors including:

the future energy consumption of firms in the country/region/sector and employment levels in those firms;

the number of energy intensive firms in that country/region/sector that are eligible to receive a discount on the main rates of the levy by signing up to an energy efficiency agreement;

what use firms in that country/region/sector make of electricity generated from 'new' renewable sources of energy and in 'good quality'.

### Thalidomide Trust

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Thalidomide Trust about issues arising from the Diageo Covenant. [6166]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The Chancellor receives a number of representations from a variety of organisations.

### Frozen Assets (Afghanistan)

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the Taliban assets in the UK which are frozen; when assets of the *(a)* Afghan National Credit and Finance and *(b)* the National Trading Company of Afghanistan were frozen; and what the value of frozen assets is. [8013]

**Ruth Kelly** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The UK Government have frozen £63 million of Taliban assets since sanctions were introduced; details of the assets are listed in the table. No funds belonging to Afghan National Credit and Finance have been frozen in the UK. The National Trading Company of Afghanistan assets were frozen on Friday 5 October 2001 as a temporary measure. When the freeze lapsed, we decided to take no further action as they work for the state of Afghanistan and not the Taliban, and are therefore not covered by the UN sanctions.

| *Bank/company* | *Number of accounts*[1] | *Sterling value (£ million)* |
|---|---|---|
| Pashtany Tejaraty bank | 6 | 3 |
| Banke Millie | 11 | 4.5 |
| Da Afghanistan bank | 13 | 55 |
| Ariana Airlines | 2 | 0.4 |
| Khalid Al-Fawwaz | 1 | 23.19 |
| Total | 33 | 63 |

[1] Approximately

### Terrorist Bank Accounts

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what global resources he has proposed since 11 September and to which bodies in respect of the use of off-shore bank accounts by terrorists and others. [7313]

**Ruth Kelly:** The UN resolutions are binding upon all states, which are expected to apply them as a matter of international law.

### Health and Education Expenditure

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a breakdown of the proportion of total gross domestic product spent by EU states on health and education in the most recent year for which figures are available, indicating the private and public portion of each nation's expenditure. [7794]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The latest information on health is contained in the "Compendium of Health Statistics", a copy of which will be placed in the Library of the House.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has its own definition of education spending as a proportion of GDP. Their figures for each European Union country were published in "Education at a Glance", a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The latest figures for expenditure as a proportion of GDP for the UK were provided by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in her reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) on 20 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 776W.

### Airline Industry (State Aid)

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussion he has had with the *(a)* DTI, *(b)* European

Commission and *(c)* representatives of UK airlines regarding possible state aid for the airline industry; and if he will make a statement. [7780]

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have to offer financial assistance to British airlines. [7464]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the answer given by the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), on 16 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 1169W to the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable).

### Census Data (Bromley)

**Mr. Forth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when the full census data for Bromley will be published; [7968]

(2) when the summary census results for Bromley will be published; [7966]

(3) what measures will be taken to provide accurate and reliable census data for Bromley; [7969]

(4) what percentage of households in Bromley completed a census return. [7967]

**Ruth Kelly:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the national statistician. I have asked him to reply.

*Letter from Len Cook to Mr. Eric Forth, dated 16 October 2001:*

As National Statistician and Registrar General for England and Wales I have been asked to reply to your recent questions to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject of the 2001 Census in Bromley. (7966–69)

In answer to your first question, the target date for mid-year 2001 population estimates by sex and age for all local authority areas (and including the London borough of Bromley) based on the 2001 Census is August 2002. These will include an adjustment for births, deaths and migration between Census Day (29 April 2001) and 30 June 2001. The target date for summary Census results—Key Statistics for areas throughout England and Wales (including London boroughs) is December 2002. They will be laid before Parliament and accessible through the National Statistics website.

With regard to your second question, at this stage I am unable to provide detailed information on the response rate to the Census in Bromley. This will be available in Autumn 2002. Currently ONS estimates that the 2001 Census response rate nationally will reach 98 per cent of households.

The full census data for Bromley will be published along with the detailed results for all the other local authority areas in the first half of 2003; these will be accessible via the National Statistics website.

In your final question you ask what measures will be taken to provide accurate and reliable census data for Bromley. A number of steps have either already been implemented or will be taken to ensure this. Prior to the Census an important new initiative was the Community liaison programme which had as its main objectives:

To facilitate enumeration and ensure full coverage.

To help provide a source of potential field staff.

To advertise the Census and underline its uses.

To provide help to individual members of local communities.

To help with translations and advertising.

This, coupled with the new strategy of asking the public to post their completed forms back, enabled resources to be targeted to where they were most needed.

Despite these efforts, it was always anticipated that some people would not be counted and that the degree of under-enumeration would vary across the country. The extent and nature of such under-enumeration will be more accurately assessed than ever before by the extensive, separate, follow-up Census Coverage Survey carried out by interviewing around 300,000 households shortly after the Census enumeration was completed. Once the interview responses and all the Census returns have been analysed, we will have a definitive picture of how well we have done at Local Authority level. The sample size for London was large enough for estimates of levels of under-enumeration for each borough to be made and will enable ONS to create a complete dataset for analysis of individual communities that takes account of this estimated under-enumeration.

Information about the quality of Census data will be published on the National Statistics website and brought together in a Census Quality Report to be published in 2003.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### Incineration

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her policy is on specifically requiring county councils to include incineration in their waste plans. [6330]

**Mr. Meacher:** County councils are not specifically required to include incineration in their waste plans. The Government are committed to maximising waste reduction, recycling and composting and minimising the need for incineration and landfill.

However Government policy, as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 10 (PPG10), states that waste planning authorities should not seek to prohibit the development of particular types of waste facility unless they are confident that adequate alternative facilities will be available in their area.

### Foot and Mouth

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of the loss in revenue to the farming industry in England as a result of foot and mouth since the start of the outbreak. [6069]

**Mr. Morley:** The Department is very much aware that the outbreak is having a considerable impact on farming and a range of industries throughout the UK. However, it is not possible at this stage to make a reliable estimate of the overall loss of revenue caused by the outbreak. DEFRA is working with a number of other Government Departments to prepare such an estimate and the results of this work will be made publicly available. We are also developing proposals for a survey to collect information from farmers on the direct and indirect impact of foot and mouth disease.

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will visit Throckmorton to discuss the implications for the local community of the carcase disposal site. [6435]

**Mr. Morley:** There are no plans for the Secretary of State to visit Throckmorton. DEFRA officials have worked closely with residents, who are represented on a Local Liaison Group made, together with one representative from the three adjoining Parish Councils.

The last disposal of carcases at this site was on 20 May; adjoining land is being used for storage of surplus materials and equipment. Steps have been taken to reduce noise and wherever possible the number of vehicles delivering surplus materials on site has been limited to five or six per day. Sunday working ceased on 16 September.

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the United Kingdom's balance of trade was in *(a)* livestock, *(b)* meat products and *(c)* all foodstuffs for the years since 1997; and what estimate she has made of how this will change as a result of foot and mouth export controls. [6500]

**Mr. Morley:** The tables show the value of UK trade in livestock, meat and meat products and total food, feed and drink between 1997 and 2000.

The total food, feed and drink (including livestock) table also shows the value of exports of items over this period which are currently under foot and mouth disease export restrictions.

*Livestock*

*£ million*

| *Trade/animal type* | *1997* | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Exports* | | | | |
| Cattle, sheep, pigs and goats | 49 | 35 | 29 | 23 |
| Poultry | 43 | 46 | 50 | 60 |
| Exports total | 92 | 81 | 79 | 84 |
| *Imports* | | | | |
| Cattle, sheep, pigs and goats | 25 | 16 | 17 | 24 |
| Poultry | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Imports total | 30 | 22 | 22 | 29 |

*Meat and meat products*

*£ million*

| *Trade type/Meat and meat products* | *1997* | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Exports* | | | | |
| Red meat | 565 | 456 | 388 | 386 |
| Red meat products | 45 | 47 | 34 | 38 |
| Poultry and other meat | 205 | 176 | 164 | 142 |
| Poultry and other meat products | 82 | 59 | 62 | 61 |
| Exports total | 898 | 738 | 649 | 627 |
| *Imports* | | | | |
| Red meat | 1,332 | 1,021 | 1,113 | 1,259 |
| Red meat products | 352 | 339 | 337 | 382 |
| Poultry and other meat | 445 | 521 | 545 | 539 |
| Poultry and other meat products | 162 | 170 | 200 | 227 |
| Imports total | 2,291 | 2,051 | 2,195 | 2,407 |

*Total food, feed and drink*[1]

*£ million*

| | *1997* | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Exports total | 10,016 | 9,327 | 9,074 | 8,905 |
| *Of which:* | | | | |
| Items currently under FMD export restrictions | 675 | 566 | 492 | 477 |
| Imports total | 17,200 | 17,220 | 17,626 | 17,176 |

[1] Including livestock

*Source:*
HM Customs and Excise

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when her Department first received an offer from hunt staff to assist in the foot and mouth slaughter process; and when the first hunt slaughterman was engaged. [5351]

**Mr. Morley:** The Masters of Foxhounds Association contacted Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food veterinary officials in the first week of the outbreak. Their offer of help was passed to local disease control centres in order that hunt staff could be called upon if needed. Local hunt staff also directly contacted the disease control centres. The first hunt slaughtermen who were properly licensed were engaged at the end of March. Finding qualified slaughtermen was not generally a problem.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many reports her Department has received of *(a)* crows, *(b)* foxes and *(c)* other wildlife eating in the open carcases slaughtered because of foot and mouth. [5350]

**Mr. Morley:** On some occasions there has been evidence that predation of slaughtered carcases may have occurred. Instructions require carcases awaiting disposal to be, as far as is practicable, put beyond the reach of predators. Carcases are also sprayed with disinfectant which may act as a deterrent to scavengers. However, such animals can and do breach measures put in place to prevent such scavenging.

Following confirmation of disease and slaughter an epidemiological inquiry is undertaken. One aspect of this is to consider possible routes of spread from the premises. Although it is a theoretical possibility that scavenging animals could spread infected carcase material to neighbouring stock, it is considered a much less likely source of infection when compared with other more direct routes of transfer and the overall risk is considered low. The rapid slaughter of affected stock remains the single most important factor in stopping production of virus.

**Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps her Department is taking to ensure that restrictions imposed on rural areas are lifted on a consistent basis. [6083]

**Mr. Morley:** The removal of movement restrictions on animals around infected premises is governed by EU rules. Other movement restrictions are applied on the basis of the disease status of a county or unitary authority or metropolitan district areas. Counties are reclassified when results of serological testing demonstrate disease freedom.

Other restrictions are largely based on veterinary risk assessments which are published on the DEFRA website.

This Department will continue to ensure that restrictions are applied and lifted on a consistent and proportionate basis. Significant progress is being made on the lifting of the restrictions on farming and other rural activities. Nine out of 10 footpaths are now re-opened. Cleansing and disinfection of farms continues and we are blood-testing animals throughout the country.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reason restrictions are being maintained on farms around the Hallburn site, Longtown, Cumbria. [5345]

**Mr. Morley:** The farms around the Hallburn site were subject to protection zone restrictions due to their proximity to foot and mouth disease infected premises. However, these restrictions were lifted on 23 August 2001. Infected premises in the area remain under separate restriction while the final cleansing and disinfection process is taking place. Farms around the Hallburn site are still subject to the national restrictions on the movement of livestock.

### Cereals (EU Aid)

**Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she has applied for EU aid to the cereals sector; and if she will make a statement. [7445]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The UK Government have not applied for any EU aid for the cereals sector. An amount of optional agrimonetary compensation for the arable sector became available on 1 July 2001. We have until 31 October to inform the European Commission if we wish to make these payments.

### Milk Task Force

**Mr. Heath:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether the Milk Task Force has resumed its considerations; and when it is expected to report. [7892]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Milk Task Force has now resumed its work and on 12 October it held its first meeting since its activities were suspended in April. The Milk Task Force hopes that it will be able to report quickly, but no specific deadlines have been set for it to complete its work.

### Peat Extraction

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what steps the Government are taking to protect UK peatlands; and if she will make a statement on the practice of peat extraction in the UK; [7776]

(2) what action she will take with regard to the European Habitats Directive in order to exempt areas of the UK from the possibility of peat extraction. [7893]

**Mr. Meacher:** The best examples of peatland habitats in the UK are notified by the country nature conservation agencies as sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs), or areas of special scientific interest in (ASSIs) in Northern Ireland. In England, peatland SSSIs are protected from damage through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, strengthened recently by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. In 1999 the UK Government endorsed the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for lowland raised bogs in which targets for restoration of damaged peatlands are set out. The BAP also contains targets for the replacement of peat in the UK horticultural industry, including supplies for amateur use—a reduction of 40 per cent. by 2005 and to 90 per cent. by 2010.

The EU Habitats Directive provides for the creation of a network of protected wildlife sites across the European Union. The UK has identified and forwarded to the European Commission 565 sites suitable for selection as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), thirty-eight of which feature a peatland habitat type. Sites in England receive the full protection offered by the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994, implementing the directive's provisions. Minerals Planning Authorities (MPAs) have statutory responsibility to determine applications for permission to extract peat.

Applications for new permissions, and extant permissions, must be assessed with regard to any potential effect peat extraction will have on the conservation status of candidate SACs, or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive. New permissions may be refused and extant permissions amended or revoked if an adverse effect is determined. Guidance to MPAs on criteria for selection and identification of acceptable sites for peat extraction is contained in Mineral Planning Guidance 13 'Guidelines for Peat Provision in England Including the Place for Alternative Materials'. Additional guidance on designated sites to MPAs is also given in Planning Policy Guidance 9 'Nature Conservation'.

### Food and Farming Policy Commission

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the Policy Commission on Food and Farming is expected to make its recommendations. [7766]

**Mr. Morley:** As set out in the announcement of 9 August, the Prime Minister has asked the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food to report by the end of this year.

### Rural White Paper

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has received from Cambridgeshire in respect of the Rural White Paper. [6175]

**Alun Michael:** During the preparation of the Rural White Paper 16 of the 799 responses to the Discussion Document "Rural England" came from individuals and organisations in Cambridgeshire, including a number of district, town and parish councils and other public, private and voluntary sector bodies. Ministers and officials also received a number of other representations from individuals and organisations in Cambridgeshire in written and other forms both during and after publication of the White Paper.

### Civil Servants (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of her Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7238]

**Mr. Morley:** The creation of DEFRA has brought together staff from the former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions: terms and conditions of employment for the new Department will need to be

negotiated. This will take account of a planned review of departmental policy on retirement age. Staff meanwhile retain their existing terms and conditions including retirement arrangements as described.

For ex-MAFF staff including executive agencies, the age of retirement may vary according to grade and reckonable service. Staff in grades at Administrative Officer level and below may generally, subject to efficiency, remain in service until age 65. Staff in higher grades are required to retire at age 60, but a short service concession is available for staff who have then served less than 20 years. Staff may also be retained past their retirement age for limited periods if, exceptionally, the Department's business needs justify it. Compulsory retirement before the normal age may exceptionally apply in circumstances of redundancy, restructuring or limited efficiency.

DEFRA staff who were formerly attached to DETR retain their retirement arrangements. These are broadly similar to those for ex-MAFF staff, and for details I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Dr. Whitehead), on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 872W.

Staff in the Intervention Board/Rural Payments Agency normally retire at age 60 but may be retained for an extended period (up to a maximum age of 65) dependent upon meeting standards of efficiency and upon the Agency's needs.

The Department sponsors a considerable number of other public sector bodies, including 20 executive NDPBs. Information is not held centrally on their retirement arrangements and could be obtained only in the form requested at disproportionate cost.

### Livestock Movement Licences (Somerset)

**Mr. Heath:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many applications for livestock movement licences were made in Somerset in the period 24 September to 4 October; and how many licences were issued in the same period. [7890]

**Mr. Morley:** Local authorities are responsible for issuing most animal movement licences. We understand from Somerset district council that during the period from 24 September to 4 October, 1,821 application forms (for farm to farm movements of livestock) were issued to Somerset farmers. Of these 780 were returned and 425 licences were issued. 92 applications were rejected by the Animal Movement Licensing System, 188 farmers withdrew their applications and 75 applications are awaiting approval.

In addition, 1,227 licences for moving livestock for slaughter have been processed by Somerset local authorities/Trading Standards own system.

### Animal Movement Licences

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many applications for animal movement licences are outstanding. [7775]

**Mr. Morley:** Local authorities are responsible for issuing animal movement licences. But we understand that the backlog of outstanding applications varies between 0 and five days' workload, with the average being one day.

### Tenant Farmers

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she last met representatives of tenant farmers. [7724]

**Mr. Morley:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not met tenant farmers' representatives since her appointment. However, the Department does maintain close contact with the tenanted sector. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State Lord Whitty met representatives from the Tenant Farmers Association on 16 July 2001 and my right hon. Friend is planning to meet them in the next few weeks.

### Overhead Powerlines

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations she has received on the environmental implications of overhead powerlines; and if she will make a statement. [3847]

**Mr. Wilson:** I have been asked to reply.

The Department has received representations on the possible health effects of overhead lines. Overhead lines, however, remain a cost-effective and acceptable means for transferring power from producers to the consumer.

## DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

### Civil Service Fast Stream

**Brian White:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he will publish the next report on recruitment to the fast stream of the civil service. [8269]

**Mr. Leslie:** In September I placed in the Library of the House the sixth annual report on recruitment to the fast stream of the civil service. It covers the results of competitions completed between 1 April 2000 and 31 March 2001.

The report shows that the civil service is increasingly successful in attracting the best graduates, despite the highly competitive nature of the market, and is doing so while maintaining the high standard required of entrants. For the first time in several years, for instance, the service has filled all its vacancies for scientists and engineers. The proportion of graduates recruited to the fast stream from minority ethnic groups has risen from 3 per cent. in 1998–99 to 7 per cent. in 2000–01. The service's commitment to improving the diversity of the fast stream will continue.

### Government Annual Report

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how much it would cost to send a summary of the Government's annual report to each taxpayer. [7122]

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** The Government have said they do not intend to publish an annual report.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will continue to publish an annual report from Government. [7121]

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** The Government announced in July that they were considering whether to continue with the annual report in its current form. The Government will continue to report to Parliament and the public on its performance through a variety of means such as reports, statistical bulletins, ministerial statements and parliamentary questions. The information in the annual report was in any event a collation of existing, publicly available material and we have decided not to continue with it.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 17 October 2001*

## DEFENCE

### Defence Vetting Agency

**Syd Rapson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the Defence Vetting Agency for the financial year 2001–02. [8604]

**Mr. Ingram:** The Defence Vetting Agency carries out security vetting checks on people employed by the Ministry of Defence, by certain other Government Departments, and by defence contractors. Since 1997, the agency has been involved in an ambitious modernisation programme to create a responsive, efficient organisation that will exploit the capabilities of modern information technology to the benefit of its customers. This is the second year of major change for the agency. During this financial year a collocation programme, which involved the closure of its London and regional offices and the setting up of an integrated organisation in York, will be completed and a number of other initiatives to improve efficiency and responsiveness will also be progressed. It is expected that performance will be depressed while those changes take place. The chief executive has been set the following key targets:

*Quality*

Key Target 1:

Achieve at a 95 per cent. success rate in dealing with specially selected cases and zero serious errors.

*Timeliness*

Key Target 2

To complete 69 per cent. of security checks within 42 days.

Key Target 3:

To complete 61 per cent. of counter terrorist checks within 42 days.

Key Target 4:

To complete 90 per cent. of developed vetting within 182 days.

Key Target 5:

To achieve average completion times of 33 days for security checks, 32 days for counter terrorist checks and 105 days for developed vetting.

*Efficiency*

Key Target 6:

To maintain the unit cost of output.

I will place copies of the corporate plan in the Library of the House.

### Medical Agencies

**Mr. Anthony D. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with the quinquennial review of the medical agencies; and if he will make a statement. [8603]

**Dr. Moonie:** I am pleased to say that the review team have completed the first phase of its studies. As indicated in my written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) of 15 December 2000, *Official Report*, column 275W, the team has covered medical arrangements for personnel in Germany and Northern Ireland; and the interrelationships between primary and secondary care as well as the functions and organisation of the Ministry of Defence's four medical agencies—the Defence Secondary Care Agency, the Defence Dental Agency, the Defence Medical Training Organisation and the Medical Supplies Agency.

I have endorsed the broad lines of the review team's report on the first phase of its studies and have agreed a package of further work to underpin and confirm its provisional conclusions. A paper summarising the main features of the team's initial report and the phase 2 work, which will take place between now and the end of the year, is being placed in the Library of the House. As the paper indicates, this further work will result in a detailed report which will form the basis of full consultation.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Foot and Mouth

**Mr. Borrow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she will publish the Government's response to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's report "Tourism—the Hidden Giant—and Foot and Mouth". [8602]

**Dr. Howells:** The Department's response to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's report on "Tourism—the Hidden Giant—and Foot and Mouth" has been laid before both Houses today.

### National Lottery

**Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to publish a response to the First report from the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, Session 2000–01, on the operation of the national lottery. [8826]

**Mr. Caborn:** The Department's response to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's report on the operation of the national lottery has been laid before both Houses today.

### Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the total amount of spending by her Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of her Department's total spending this constitutes; and if she will make a statement. [6779]

**Tessa Jowell:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the total expenditure was on *(a)* advertising, *(b)* polling, *(c)* focus groups, *(d)* design consultants, *(e)* caterers, *(f)* production of departmental publications and *(g)* photographs/photograhers by her Department for each year since 1995 in (i) cash and (ii) real terms; what was (A) the annual percentage increase in spending on each category and (B) spending on each category as a percentage of the total departmental running costs; and if she will make a statement. [6882]

**Ms Hewitt:** Excluding its agencies and non-departmental public bodies, the total cash expenditure on publishing, preparation and production of those official publications, which have been notified to the Department's publications unit by individual budget holders, is as follows:

| Year | Cash (£) | Real (1995 prices) (£) | Per cent. increase in real terms from previous year | Spending as per cent. of total running costs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1995–96 | 5,463,340 | 5,463,340 | n/a | 1.2 |
| 1996–97 | 5,176,892 | 5,011,512 | –8.3 | 1.2 |
| 1997–98 | 4,886,238 | 4,596,649 | –8.3 | 1.2 |
| 1998–99 | 7,208,674 | 6,583,264 | 43.2 | 1.7 |
| 1999–2000 | 4,552,019 | 4,064,303 | –38.3 | 1.0 |
| 2000–01 | 5,298,296 | 4,647,628 | 14.4 | 1.1 |

These figures exclude the costs of publications produced for internal use. Where the Department makes use of a private sector publisher, the publishing, printing and design costs are generally met by the publisher as part of its acceptance of the risks of publication.

The Department does not routinely collect the other information requested at the required level of detail, and to provide it would entail disproportionate cost.

## TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

### Vehicle Accidents

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many people in the last three years for which figures are available, in *(a)* mid-Essex and *(b)* the county of Essex (i) have died and (ii) have been injured as a result of vehicle accidents. [7168]

**Mr. Jamieson** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Deaths and injuries on public roads in accidents which involved a road vehicle are shown in the table for the County of Essex and for the areas covered by the local authorities Braintree District and Chelmsford Borough.

| | Braintree District & Chelmsford Borough | | County of Essex | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Killed | Injured | Killed | Injured |
| 1998 | 15 | 1,558 | 84 | 9,052 |
| 1999 | 23 | 1,646 | 112 | 9,123 |
| 2000 | 20 | 1,555 | 86 | 9,462 |

### Planning Appeals

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) how many appeals against planning decisions made by Fareham borough council were outstanding at *(a)* 31 December 1998, *(b)* 31 December 1999, *(c)* 31 December 2000 and *(d)* 30 June 2001; [6270]

(2) how many appeals there were in respect of planning applications made in the area covered by Fareham borough council in *(a)* 1998, *(b)* 1999 and *(c)* 2000. [6269]

**Ms Keeble** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The provision of information on planning appeals is the responsibility of the Planning Inspectorate. I have asked the Inspectorate's Chief Executive, Mr. Chris Shepley, to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from C. J. Shepley to Mr. Mark Hoban, dated 17 October 2001:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Questions about planning appeals in the Fareham Borough Council area.

The number of planning appeals received and in hand at the end of each year were:

| Year | Appeals received | Appeals in hand at end of period |
|---|---|---|
| 1998 | 48 | 16 |
| 1999 | 47 | 13 |
| 2000 | 48 | 21 |

There were 16 appeals in hand at 30 June 2001.

### National Homelessness Strategy

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) *(a)* on what date he issued the consultation documents on the national homelessness strategy and *(b)* on what date those organisations that he has specifically invited to comment on the consultation were first alerted to the fact that the consultation was to take place; [7825]

(2) if he will list the organisations that he has specifically invited to comment on the consultation document, national homelessness strategy. [7824]

**Ms Keeble:** My Department placed a consultation document inviting views on a national homelessness strategy on its internet site on 21 September 2001. The Department has established a Stakeholder Group to assist

in the development of the national homelessness strategy. The organisations represented on the Group are as follows:

The Association for London Government
The British Property Federation
The Chartered Institute of Housing
The Council of Mortgage Lenders
The Greater London Authority
Havant borough council
The Housing Corporation
The Housing Inspectorate
The Local Government Association
Manchester city council
The National Homeless Alliance
The National Housing Federation
Portsmouth city council
Shelter
The Small Landlords Association.

Most of these organisations were invited to participate on or shortly after 12 September 2001.

### New Roads and Street Works Act

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many local authorities have fined utility companies using powers under section 74 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. [7508]

**Ms Keeble:** 110 local authorities have now informed the Government that they are or will be making use of the powers to levy a daily charge on utilities where the latter's works overrun an agreed deadline. While we do not yet have comprehensive details as to exactly how many authorities have already imposed charges, the Department's consultants, Halcrow, will be gathering such information for the Government as part of the study they are conducting into the effect of the section 74 powers.

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment he has made of the operation of the powers given through section 74 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991; and if he will make a statement. [7509]

**Ms Keeble:** Halcrow have been appointed by the Government to carry out an assessment of the effect of the section 74 powers. They will be providing me with an interim report by the end of this year. A further report, covering the first 12 months of operation of the new powers will follow in spring 2002.

### Road Works (Local Authority Charges)

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what assessment has been made of the experiment of allowing local authorities to charge utility companies a daily amount for digging up the road; and if he will make a statement. [7510]

**Ms Keeble:** On 14 August, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Transport launched a consultation on the details of two pilot schemes to be launched in the London borough of Camden and in Middlesbrough. As part of the pilots, the two councils will be able to levy a daily charge (or "lane rental" as it is often called) on utilities carrying out works on the highway. The pilots are expected to begin in January 2002, and we will be monitoring closely the effect they have on the disruption caused to road users by utilities' works in the two areas.

### "Lane Rental" Schemes

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to pilot projects in local authorities to test the effectiveness of allowing them to levy a lane rental charge on companies undertaking street works. [8517]

**Ms Keeble:** My Department has recently concluded a period of consultation on draft regulations to permit pilot "lane rental" schemes in Middlesbrough and the London borough of Camden under section 74A of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. We intend laying revised regulations before the House later this autumn and envisage that the pilots will begin operation early in 2002.

### Road Noise

**Mr. Gareth R. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made on surfacing concrete roads with quieter material. [8127]

**Mr. Jamieson:** Having consulted with English local highway authorities and other interested bodies, we have established criteria for prioritising the surfacing of concrete trunk roads with quieter materials. These criteria are:

1. that wherever possible the application of quieter surfaces will fit in with normal maintenance needs;
2. that priority will be given to those sites where treatment would benefit the greatest number of people.
3. that the works will be carried out in such a way as to minimise disruption to general public and users of network;
4. that priority will be given to roads, opened since June 1988, where actual noise levels have turned out to be significantly higher than predicted at the time of the Public Inquiry.

I am pleased to be able to announce a list of schemes that satisfy the first criterion and are planned for the following three years (2002–03, 2003–04 and 2004–05). They are listed together with those that are planned for 2001–02.

| *Region* | *Project description* | *Length (km)* | *Properties affected per km* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *2001–02* | | | |
| South East | A12 Hatfield Peverel | 1.5 | 158 |
| South East | M11 J6–7 NB | 7 | 11 |
| South East | M27 J2–4 | 9 | 125 |
| South East | M25 J16–17 marker post 104/9 to 110/4 | 6.0 | 32 |
| South West | M5 J26–27 marker post 227/2 to 229/8 | 2.6 | 5 |

| Region | Project description | Length (km) | Properties affected per km |
|---|---|---|---|
| Midlands | M42 J9–10 northbound carriageway | 6.8 | 174 |
| Midlands | A1 Winthorpe to North Muskham | 4.1 | 37 |
| Midlands | A1 Long Bennington Bypass | 3.5 | 41 |
| *2002–03 to 2004–05* | | | |
| Midlands | A1 Winthorpe—Coddington | 3 | 93 |
| Midlands | A1 Coddington—Balderton | 3 | 37 |
| Midlands | A1 Carlton—North Muskham | 5.3 | 12 |
| Midlands | A46 Widmerpool to Willoughby | 4 | 1 |
| Midlands | A46 Willoughby to Six Hills | 4 | 0 |
| Midlands | M42 J2–3 Crack and Seat contract 1 | 3.8 | 6 |
| Midlands | M42 J9–10 | 11.5 | 28 |
| Midlands | M69 Con 2 J21 to flexible section | 10 | 8 |
| Northern | A180 Harbrough—Stallingborough | 4 | 11 |
| Northern | A180 Great Coates—Pyewipe | 3.5 | 15 |
| Northern | M62 Gilberdyke—Newport | 3.8 | 1 |
| Northern | M180 Sandtoft J2 | 3.8 | 0 |
| Northern | M180 J2—Beltoft | 3.8 | 2 |
| South East | A12 Brentwood 2 | 4.4 | 87 |
| South East | A12 Witham | 7 | 117 |
| South East | M25 J26–27 Contract 2 (MP153/1–158/6) | 4.4 | 44 |
| South East | A47 East Dereham Bypass (2000–01) | 3.2 | 205 |
| South East | M20 J10–11 | 6.5 | 58 |
| South East | M11 J9–8 Phase 1 | 7 | 27 |
| South East | M11 J6–7 SB | 7 | 11 |
| South East | M20 J11–13 (MP 100/1–109/2) | 6 | 156 |
| South West | M5 J27 South to Willand | 5 | 51 |
| South West | M5 J26–27 NB and SB (MP 217/B-220/0) | 4.4 | 5 |
| South West | M5 J26–27 NB and SB (MP 220/0–223/6) | 3.6 | 5 |
| South West | M5 J26–27 NB and SB (MP 223/6 to 227/2) | 3.6 | 5 |

The Highways Agency is currently identifying additional schemes that satisfy the second and third criteria and could be added to this list. The agency has also identified 17 roads with concrete surfaces that have been opened since June 1988 and has instigated a programme of noise surveys to identify those that satify the fourth criterion. These roads are:

M18 Junctions 5–6

M20 Junctions 9–8

M23 Junctions 10–9 Northbound Lane 1

A1-M1 Link

A11 Besthorpe-Wymondham Bypass

A13 A1306 to M25 Junction 30

A27 Chichester-Havant

A30 Exeter-Honiton

A34 Peartree-Weston

A35 Tolpuddle/Puddletown

A50 Doveridge Bypass

A50 Derby Southern Bypass

A50 Foston-Hatton-Hilton Bypass

A52 Bottesford Bypass

A249 (M2 to Iwade)

A417/419 Cirencester and Latton Bypass

A483 (B5445 to Welsh Boundary).

## Transport Grant (GLA)

**Mr. Gareth R. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how much transport grant he has allocated for the Greater London Authority for 2001–02. [8128]

**Mr. Jamieson:** GLA transport grant is determined annually after consultation with the Mayor of London under section 101 of the GLA Act 1999. The Secretary of State has today redetermined the level of grant for 2001–02 at £714,388,000. This reflects additional monies paid to the Mayor in respect of his share of the costs relating to preparation for an east-west rail link across London, and other minor adjustments.

## Railtrack

**Lawrie Quinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will provide details of how his Department will provide financial assistance for Railtrack plc in administration. [8715]

**Mr. Byers:** Full details of the funding arrangements agreed with the administrators are in the Loan Agreement. Parliamentary approval for this new expenditure in the form of a voted loan (to be repaid when Railtrack plc moves out of administration) will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for DTLR. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £800 million will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

## Correspondence

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will publish the letter of 9 October from Vernon Hince, Acting General Secretary of RMT, to the Chief Executive of Strategic Rail Authority and the Chief Executive's reply. [8107]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The publication of this correspondence is a matter for the individuals concerned and my hon. Friend may therefore wish to contact them direct.

## EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### Sixth Form Education

**Mr. Bacon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the cost of administering the sixth form reforms. [6643]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** We have not made an assessment of those costs. There will be no change to funding for local education authority administrative costs. The Department funds the Learning and Skills Council for its administrative costs. We expect the LSC to deliver its new sixth form funding responsibilities within the overall administrative budget allocated to it. There is no separate element within that overall budget identified for work on school sixth forms.

### Specialist Schools

**Mr. Willis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools bidding for specialist status under the specialist schools programme were supported by donations from the Technology Colleges Trust as part of the qualifying sponsorship criteria in the years *(a)* 1999–2000 and *(b)* 2000–01. [7689]

**Mr. Timms:** The Technology Colleges Trust does not itself make donations to applicant schools but raises funds from other donors. Detailed information on the sponsorship included in school applications for specialist status in 1999–2000 and 2000–01 is not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, we do have an analysis of applications for Arts, Technology and Language College status in June and October 1999 and in March 2000, which shows that 37 per cent. of applicants included sponsorship arranged through the Technology Colleges Trust.

**Mr. Willis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how much the planned expansion of the specialist school programme depends on the ability of the Technology Colleges Trust to support financially schools that are unable to find some or all of the required sponsorship. [7690]

**Mr. Timms:** The Technology Colleges Trust seeks at national level to raise sponsorship that can be allocated to schools intending to apply for specialist schools designation. Many specialist school applications include elements of sponsorship raised in this way. This is one source of sponsorship and has been part of the initiative since it began in 1994 and we expect it to remain so. Funds raised at national level help to ensure that schools are not excluded from the programme because of particular local difficulties in raising sponsorship.

**Mr. Willis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools have failed to achieve specialist school status through their inability to raise the level of sponsorship that is required. [7691]

**Mr. Timms:** Our network of 685 specialist schools shows that applicant schools across the country, including those from rural and inner city areas, have raised the sponsorship required, but we are aware that some schools find this more difficult than others. It would not be practicable to make an estimate of the number of schools that have been unable to raise funds but we have taken steps to ensure all schools have a reasonable opportunity to do so. In 1999, the sponsorship requirement was halved to £50,000 and my Department grant aids the Technology Colleges and Youth Sport Trusts to provide advice to schools about raising sponsorship and raise funds themselves to support applicant schools. We will keep the sponsorship criteria under review.

**Mr. Willis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to change the sponsorship requirement for schools wishing to join the specialist schools programme. [7692]

**Mr. Timms:** There are no current plans to relax or remove the sponsorship requirement except that we are considering the position in relation to very small secondary schools. We will keep the situation under review.

### National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will fund places at the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth to the most academically able 5 per cent. of the school population whether or not parents can afford to pay fees. [7494]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The tender documentation for the Academy says that tenderers should

> "consider the contribution that might be made to income through fees and charges associated with its services, ensuring that these do not create a disincentive to participation on the part of those from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds".

The level and use of Government funding will be agreed when we have identified the winning tender.

### Local Education Authorities

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what resources she plans to provide to local education authorities, with particular reference to Worcestershire, prior to the introduction of a new system for setting standard spending assessments for education for the financial year 2002–03; and if she will make a statement. [8037]

**Mr. Timms:** In 2002–03 the overall increase in Education Standard Spending will be over £1.3 billion or 5.7 per cent.; direct grants to schools will increase by 2.75 per cent.; and Standards Fund grant will increase by £85.6 million. We are currently working up proposals for a reformed system of school and LEA funding for introduction in 2003–04.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Civil Defence Guidance

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what civil defence guidance has been issued to schools since 11 September; [7501]

(2) what plans he has to issue updated civil defence guidance to parents of school age children. [7500]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* I have been asked to reply.

Existing Government guidance to local authorities and others on civil defence continues to apply. My Department will shortly issue further guidance for local education authorities to disseminate to schools and others on a range of issues resulting from the terrorist attacks in the USA and subsequent events.

## Overseas Domestic Workers

**Gillian Merron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will change the arrangements for overseas domestic workers who accompany their employers to the United Kingdom. [8743]

**Angela Eagle:** There is a longstanding concession, outside the Immigration Rules, enabling overseas employers coming to the United Kingdom to bring their domestic workers with them, if they need to do so.

Changes to the conditions under which overseas domestic workers could be admitted to the United Kingdom were laid before the House on 23 July 1998. The primary objective of those changes was to deal with concerns about reports of abuse suffered by such workers. Responding to those concerns, while minimising scope for immigration abuse, presented a difficult balance. We therefore undertook at the time to review the changes in the light of operational experience.

Following this review, a number of changes are being made with effect from today, which we shall include in the Immigration Rules at a suitable opportunity.

In response to concerns raised by the employers of domestic workers, the level of duties needing to be performed by the worker will no longer have to exceed those set down in the International Labour Organisation's International Standard Classification of Occupations.

We remain concerned at reports of abuse of domestic workers accompanying their employers to the United Kingdom and have discussed with Kalayaan, the organisation that represents overseas domestic workers, how this can be prevented. We have decided to continue allowing domestic workers to change employer but will be asking any that do so to inform the Immigration and Nationality Directorate in writing, outlining their reasons for doing so, at the earliest opportunity. This will enable officials to monitor any possible abuse of the concession by either individuals or employers and, if detected, liaise with other departments to ascertain whether any action could be taken.

We are also clarifying what is meant in the concession by the meaning of 'household'. Some United Kingdom-based employers have long argued that, although they reside here, they maintain a household abroad and therefore domestic workers currently working in their overseas residence should qualify under this concession. We will make clear that a domestic worker wishing to come to the United Kingdom is expected to have been carrying out domestic duties under the same roof as their employer for 12 months before applying for entry clearance, or in a household that the employer uses for himself on a regular basis and where there is clear evidence of a connection between employer and employee. The domestic worker will also be expected to travel to the United Kingdom with their employer, their employer's spouse or minor child.

This definition should make it clear that the concession is not intended to allow employers who are resident here to recruit domestic workers from overseas. It will also benefit those employers who regularly divide their time between two houses.

## Drugs

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his estimate is of the levels of repeat offending among drug misusing offenders in each year since 1997. [5888]

**Mr. Denham:** The New English and Welsh Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (NEW-ADAM) research programme provides estimates of repeat offending drug misusing offenders for the purpose of tracking the drugs strategy. Repeat offending drug misusing offenders are defined as the proportion of arrestees that are using heroin and/or cocaine/crack at least once a week and who have offended at least twice a month in the last 12 months. As yet estimates are available only for the financial year 1999–2000. The proportion of arrestees falling within the definition of repeat offending drug misusing offenders category is 15 per cent. Please note that this only represents the interim baseline result. A summary of the full baseline data will be available in due course.

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the extent of access to drugs among five to 16-year-olds in each year since 1997. [5762]

**Mr. Denham:** The survey of smoking, drinking and drug use among school children aged 11 to 15 years includes a question on whether children have been offered drugs.

Information on the proportion of 11 to 15-year-olds in England who were offered drugs is presented in the table. Information regarding younger children is not available centrally.

The data requested are available only for the years 1998–2000.

*Percentage of 11 to 15 year olds in England who have been offered drugs*

| *Year* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| 1998 | 34 |
| 1999 | 35 |
| 2000 | 35 |

Bases: 1998 = 4,751; 1999 = 8,795; 2000 = 7,089

*Sources*

Goddard, E. and Higgins, V. (1999) "Drug use, smoking and drinking among young teenagers in 1998". London: The Stationery Office.

Goddard, E. and Higgins, V. (2000) "Drug use, smoking and drinking among young teenagers in 1999". London: The Stationery Office.

Department of Health Statistical Press Notice July 2001. "Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2000".

### Prison Service

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the percentage of the Prison Service estate which will be privately managed by 2005; and if he will make a statement. [5104]

**Beverley Hughes** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* The estimated percentage is 8 per cent.; this represents 11 prisons out of a total of 138.

### Asylum Seekers

**Mr. Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the voucher support system for asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement. [6281]

**Angela Eagle:** We received many representations regarding the voucher support system and will make an announcement in due course.

### Mother and Baby Units

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many women have applied for admission to a prison mother and baby unit on reception to prison; [7941]

(2) how many women have been refused admission to a prison mother and baby unit in the last two years; and if he will make a statement. [7937]

**Beverley Hughes:** The information requested is not held centrally. However, computer systems have recently been installed in each of the four mother and baby units and will record that type of information and transmit it to a central point. The staff concerned are being trained in its use and some inputting of new cases has begun.

### Fire Safety (Prisons)

**Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on fire safety in prisons. [7399]

**Beverley Hughes:** Fire safety in prisons is the responsibility of the individual prison governor. Prison governors are provided with guidance on the measures to be taken regarding fire safety in the form of written advice contained in the Prison Service publication "Fire Standards in Prison Establishments", copies of which are in the Library. Further advice is provided by fire safety qualified staff of the Prison Service Fire Safety Section.

Prison premises are exempt from the requirement to have a fire certificate under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 but are subject to the requirements of the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 as amended 1999. In state prisons these regulations are enforced by officers of The Crown Premises Inspection Group of Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate. In private prisons the regulations are enforced by the local fire authority.

Information relating to Scotland is a matter for the Scottish Executive and information relating to Northern Ireland a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

### Al Muhijiroon

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action he proposes to take concerning recent statements issued by Al Muhijiroon members *(a)* Shah Jalal Hussain, *(b)* Omar Brooks, *(c)* Abu Yahya and *(d)* Zahir Khan; [7640]

(2) if he will investigate the links between Abu Hamza and the Aden Abyan Islamic Army; and if he will make a statement; [7638]

(3) if he will make a statement concerning the activities of the Takfir wal-Hijra organisation at the North London Central Mosque; and if he will make a statement; [7637]

(4) if he will investigate the links between Abu Hamza and Rachid Ramda, awaiting extradition to France since 1995; and if he will make a statement; [7639]

(5) if he will investigate the links between Sakina Security Services Ltd., Al Muhijiroon and Supporters of Sharia; and if he will make a statement; [7572]

(6) if he will investigate the nature of training courses offered at North London Central Mosque, Finsbury Park; and if he will make a statement; [7542]

(7) if he will make a statement concerning the activities of Yasser-Al-Siri; [7634]

(8) if he will make a statement on the activities of Supporters of Sharia since 11 September; [7565]

(9) if he will investigate whether Al Muhijiroon members have acted in contravention of the proscription of Hamas, Hezbollah or Islamic Jihad; and if he will make a statement; [7631]

(10) if he will investigate the links between Al Muhijiroon and Hamas and Hezbollah; and if he will make a statement; [7544]

(11) if he will make a statement concerning the statements issued by and actions of Abu Hamza since 11 September; [7543]

(12) if he will make a statement on investigations into the activities of Al Muhijiroon; [7939]

(13) what assessment he has made of recent statements issued on behalf of Sakina Security Services Ltd.; and if he will make a statement; [7547]

(14) what action he proposes to take concerning the fatwa issued by Omar Bakri Mohammed against the President of Pakistan; and if he will make a statement; [7671]

(15) if he will investigate the links between Abu Hamza and Ahmed Begal, recently arrested in Dubai; and if he will make a statement; [7636]

(16) if he will make a statement about the activities of Al Muhijiroon since 11 September; [7568]

(17) if he will investigate the activities of Muhammed Jamed with reference to Sakina Security and Al Muhijiroon; and if he will make a statement. [7632]

**Mr. Blunkett:** I have been in close touch with the relevant policing and anti-terrorist units, and with the Attorney-General, in tracking the work undertaken in surveilling, monitoring and evaluating evidence which might be used in any prosecution. As my hon. Friend

knows, the detailed operational functions lie with the police and intelligence services, and decisions on prosecutions with the Crown Prosecution Service. We have made it clear that those who step over the line will be prosecuted.

### Islamic Fundamentalism (Recruitment)

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action he proposes to take to restrict the activities of those involved in recruiting British citizens for paramilitary training *(a)* in the UK and *(b)* overseas on behalf of Islamic fundamentalist organisations; and if he will make a statement; [7437]

(2) if he will make a statement on the activities of Al Muhijiroon and Supporters of Sharia in recruiting for training which is linked to terrorism; [7633]

(3) what action he plans to take concerning the statement by Omar Bakri Mohammed of 30 May 2000 in al Sharq al Awsat, on British passport holders being sent on Al Muhijiroon guerrilla training courses in the USA; [7670]

(4) what assessment he has made of the number of British citizens who *(a)* have recently undergone and *(b)* are undergoing (i) military and (ii) paramilitary training overseas, organised by Islamic fundamentalist groups; and if he will make a statement; [7438]

(5) if he will make a statement concerning the activities of Abu Yahya in respect of recruitment for military training camps in Kashmir. [7555]

**Mr. Blunkett:** I am aware of the allegations relating to the training of United Kingdom nationals overseas. Under Section 54 (1) and (2) of the Terrorism Act 2000, it is an offence to provide instruction or training or to receive instruction or training in the making or use of firearms, explosives, or chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. In addition, under subsection (3) (b) a person commits an offence if he invites another to receive instruction or training and the receipt would constitute an offence under subsection (2) but for the fact that it is to take place outside the United Kingdom. Any concrete and verifiable evidence of such activities will be dealt with immediately, and the police and intelligence services are fully aware of this.

### Terrorism Act

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will assess the evidence for proscribing Supporters of Sharia under the Terrorism Act 2000; and if he will make a statement; [7553]

(2) if he will assess the evidence with a view to proscribing Al Muhijiroon under the Terrorism Act 2000; and if he will make a statement. [7545]

**Mr. Blunkett:** Schedule 2 of the Terrorism Act 2000 applies only to those terrorist organisations which are 'concerned in terrorism' as defined under Section 3 of the Act. Decisions to proscribe and deproscribe are and will continue to be taken only after the most careful consideration and on the basis of the best possible security and other appropriate advice. Any evidence which my hon. Friend feels would be of assistance in aiding the process should be supplied to my Department immediately.

### Sakina Security Services

**Mr. Dismore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the US authorities concerning Sakina Security Services; and if he will make a statement. [7635]

**Mr. Blunkett:** None. However, the police, who are responsible for the investigation of any alleged illegal activity, have been meeting regularly with their United States counterparts to discuss a range of issues including those companies or organisations where concerns have been raised.

### Refugees

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refugees have sought to enter the UK from *(a)* Iran, *(b)* Iraq and *(c)* Afghanistan since January; and if he will make a statement. [8054]

**Angela Eagle:** It is not possible to provide information on how many refugees have sought to enter the United Kingdom in any given period, because some refugees arrive clandestinely and subsequently claim asylum in-country rather than claiming on arrival at United Kingdom ports, and because not all attempts to enter the United Kingdom are successful. Information on the numbers of applications for asylum to the United Kingdom in 2001 from nationals of Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan is provided in the table.

*Applications for asylum to the UK from nationals of Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, by location where made, January-July 2001*

| | *Port* | *In-country* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Afghanistan* | | | |
| January | 185 | 325 | 510 |
| February | 310 | 305 | 615 |
| March | 470 | 210 | 680 |
| April | 500 | 200 | 700 |
| May | 560 | 335 | 900 |
| June | 655 | 255 | 910 |
| July | 550 | 260 | 810 |
| Total | 3,230 | 1,890 | 5,120 |
| *Iran* | | | |
| January | 155 | 430 | 585 |
| February | 105 | 255 | 355 |
| March | 110 | 180 | 295 |
| April | 100 | 195 | 295 |
| May | 70 | 135 | 205 |
| June | 65 | 130 | 200 |
| July | 105 | 135 | 245 |
| Total | 715 | 1,460 | 2,175 |
| *Iraq* | | | |
| January | 185 | 570 | 755 |
| February | 230 | 475 | 710 |
| March | 215 | 215 | 425 |
| April | 155 | 140 | 295 |
| May | 175 | 160 | 340 |
| June | 205 | 240 | 440 |
| July | 340 | 240 | 580 |
| Total | 1,500 | 2,045 | 3,545 |

*Note:*

All data are provisional, exclude dependants, and are rounded to nearest 5.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Departmental Properties

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the total annual running costs for buildings used, owned or rented by his Department for each nation and region of the UK, and estimate the average cost per sq m for properties used by his Department as a whole, and by region and nation of the UK. [6819]

**Mr. MacShane:** Within the UK, the FCO currently occupies, or partly occupies, seven properties, all located in England. The total internal letting area for these is 90,000 sq m. Total running costs (including the capital charge) in 2000–01 were £22.4 million. Average cost per sq m was £249.

### Overseas British Prisoners

**Mr. Alan Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those British citizens held in foreign jails for which consular support has been requested, by *(a)* name, *(b)* country of imprisonment and *(c)* date of imprisonment. [7827]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** As of 1 October we were aware of 3,605 British nationals in prison overseas. Around 40 per cent. of these prisoners were convicted on drugs related offences.

The 3,605 prisoners are serving their sentences in 126 different countries. The 10 countries with the most British nationals serving sentences are:

USA: 674
Spain: 421
France: 382
Germany: 220
Australia: 152
Thailand: 31
Jamaica: 129
Belgium: 113
Ireland: 140
Venezuela: 35.

To list the British citizens and offences for which each prisoner was convicted would incur disproportionate costs and breach consular confidentiality.

The welfare of British nationals in prison overseas is one of our key concerns. Although we cannot get prisoners released, we do whatever we can to ensure their human rights are protected. We work closely with NGOs and human rights organisations to ensure that their rights are respected.

## HEALTH

### Correspondence

**Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for South-West Surrey concerning variations in levels of revenue funding for hospices. [7559]

**Mr. Hutton:** A reply to the right hon. Member was sent on 10 October.

### Beta Interferon

**Vernon Coaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what negotiations he plans to have with drug companies on the cost of beta interferon. [7427]

**Mr. Hutton** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* We have met three companies in the light of the points made in the National Institute for Clinical Excellence's provisional appraisal determination and are planning further discussions.

### Waiting Lists

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been waiting (1) over six months for an appointment in hospitals within Lancashire; [7699]

(2) over 12 months for an operation in hospitals within the north-west. [7746]

**Mr. Hutton:** At the end of August 2001, 1,076 patients had been waiting more than 26 weeks for an out-patient appointment after being referred by a general practitioner to a hospital trust in Lancashire. This represents a 41.3 per cent. reduction compared with August 2000. Plans are in place to eliminate all over 26-week waits by the end of March 2002.

The number of patients waiting more than 12 months for in-patient or day case treatment in the north-west, at the end of August, was 6,369. This is 20 per cent. fewer than the previous August figure.

### Overseas Treatment

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information or guidance he has issued during the past two months to NHS trust chairmen on *(a)* the purchasing of health care from other EU countries and *(b)* employing staff from other EU countries on short-term contracts; [7107]

(2) what contracts *(a)* his Department and *(b)* NHS (i) trusts and (ii) agencies have signed during the past month with an EU-based supplier of health care offering to treat British patients abroad, giving details in each case; [7106]

(3) what negotiations he has had during the past two months with suppliers of health care in other EU countries offering to treat patients abroad. [7108]

**Mr. Milburn** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* On 12 July the European Court of Justice ruled on joined cases C-157/99 Geraets-Smits and Peerbooms and case C-368/98 Vanbraekel that some hospital services may fall within EC single market rules if they are provided for remuneration.

Following this ruling, the Government announced that National Health Service commissioners will be able to commission care for NHS patients from providers in other member states of the European Union, as part of their wider efforts to reduce waiting times.

NHS chief executives were alerted to the announcement on 30 August through the Chief Executive's Bulletin issued by the Department of Health.

I have not had any negotiations with suppliers of health care in other EU countries offering to treat NHS patients. Officials in the Department have met several organisations which provide or arrange treatment in other member states of the European Union.

The decision to treat NHS patients in mainland Europe will be made locally as part of normal NHS commissioning arrangements. The Department has not signed any contracts and is not aware of any contracts that have been signed by primary care trusts or health authorities. The Department is working closely with NHS managers and clinicians in Portsmouth, East Kent, West Sussex and East Surrey to offer patients the option of going to other European countries for procedures. Lessons learned from these areas on the legal, clinical and quality issues involved in sending NHS patients abroad for treatment will inform guidance, which will be sent out to the service later this year.

The recruitment of staff from the EU is an important part of the Department's recruitment and retention strategy and we are currently undertaking a range of initiatives, including the recruitment of doctors and nurses from Spain and doctors through our global recruitment campaign. A Code of Practice on International Recruitment was launched on 12 October which sets out for the NHS guidelines on the ethical and effective recruitment of staff from abroad.

## Radiotherapy

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital trusts in England have received new radiotherapy equipment in the last two years paid for predominantly out of public funds. [7593]

**Mr. Hutton** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Investment through the New Opportunities Fund and the NHS Plan will provide public funds for 102 linear accelerators for treating cancer. In the last two years 30 linear accelerators have been delivered to 20 National Health Service trusts and are expected to be treating patients by the end of the year.

In addition as part of the planned investment announced in this period, public funding has been allocated for radiotherapy treatment planning computers and simulation equipment to support these. By 2004 all of this radiotherapy equipment will be in place. In total we expect 41 of the 48 hospitals delivering radiotherapy in England to have received equipment through central funding.

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what investment has taken place in radiotherapy equipment in the NHS in each of the last four years; and what percentage of this was funded from NHS rather than voluntary sector sources. [7592]

**Mr. Hutton** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Investment in radiotherapy equipment by the National Health Service in the last four years will have come from a number of sources and will not always have been made through central purchasing channels. Radiotherapy equipment may include linear accelerators, remote afterloading equipment, superficial treatment machines, and treatment planning computers and simulation equipment. Provision has been through traditional capital purchasing and through leasing arrangements.

New Opportunities Fund funding of £44 million has been allocated to radiotherapy equipment over this period and further funding will be made available centrally for linear accelerators, simulation equipment and treatment planning computers, as announced in the NHS Plan.

## Combined Heat and Power

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many combined heat and power projects have been installed in NHS properties since 1997. [7615]

**Mr. Hutton** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The information requested is not collected centrally.

The Department supports the Government's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as detailed in the current climate change programme, and in the Government's target for 10,000 megawatts of electricity (Mwe) installed combined heat and power (CHP) by the year 2010. Installing CHP in National Health Service premises is an effective means of achieving the energy/carbon efficiencies required as part of this agenda for action.

Since 1990 the NHS has been working towards energy efficiency savings and successfully achieved the Government's previous target of a 20 per cent. reduction in energy use from 1990 to 2000. The new target is a 15 per cent. energy, 0.15 million tonnes carbon efficiency saving from a base year of March 2000 to March 2010. Ways of meeting this target will continue to include the introduction, where appropriate, of CHP plant.

## Heart Transplants

**Mr. McCabe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place a copy of the Royal College of Surgeons' report into the effectiveness of heart transplant procedures in the Library. [7150]

**Mr. Hutton:** A copy of the Royal College of Surgeons of England's report entitled "The Report of the Working Party to Review Organ Transplantation", published in January 1999, will be placed in the Library.

## Health Expenditure

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figure he uses as the EU average expenditure on health to form the basis of his target of meeting this figure in the UK; and by when he expects to achieve that target. [7792]

**Mr. Hutton:** We aim to increase health expenditure in the United Kingdom up to the average of the countries of the European Union, which is around 8 per cent. of gross domestic product. By the end of the present spending review period (2003–04), we expect that total United Kingdom expenditure on health will have reached 7.7 per cent. of gross domestic product. Public sector spending beyond this period will be decided in future spending reviews.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### Waste Plans

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reasons the inspector appointed by the Government to oversee the consultation exercise during the drawing up of the recent Essex waste plan forbade Essex county council from specifically excluding incinerators from the plan. [5196]

**Ms Keeble** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I have been asked to reply.

The inspector did not forbid Essex county council from specifically excluding incinerators from the plan. The deposit draft plan itself, which was before the inspector at the inquiry, did not exclude incinerators. It set out a policy, W7K, which provided criteria for considering planning applications for incinerators, and at policy W8A it identified sites for major waste management facilities, which explicitly might include incinerators. In response to objections, the inspector recommended retention of these policies subject to modifications.

In a schedule of proposed changes put to the inquiry by the county council, it was proposed to delete policy W7K. But this did not amount to excluding incinerators from the plan, as the relevant criteria were proposed to be transferred, with amendments, to policy W8A. The inspector recommended against such a change for reasons set out in his report, principally that it confused the criteria to be applied to proposed incinerators with those to be applied to major waste management sites, which might not necessarily be developed for incinerators.

It would not in any case have been possible for the Inspector to have forbidden the county council for excluding incinerators. His role was to make recommendations to the county as to how they should respond to the objections made. It remained for the county council to decide whether or not to accept those recommendations.

The reasons why the Inspector did not recommend the council to exclude incinerators from the plan as some objectors would have wished are set out in his report, especially paras 27.11–27.14 and 27.36–27.39. To get the full picture these paragraphs should be read in the context of other parts of the report, especially the remainder of part 27 and parts 5 and 34. In summary the main reasons are:

Whatever the plan says, it cannot prevent planning applications for incinerators in Essex from being submitted. It is appropriate therefore that the plan should set out how the county council would respond to such applications. The deposit draft plan proposed to deal with this by stating criteria against which planning applications would be considered, as well as identifying sites for waste management facilities in general. The inspector supported this basic approach.

It would in theory have been possible for the plan to state a presumption against any incinerators being permitted. But this would have to be justified by land use planning considerations and take account of advice about the relationship between planning and pollution control (report para 5.12). National policy in "Waste Strategy 2000" provides for a continuing role for energy from waste, including incinerators, as part of the waste hierarchy. There was no such presumption in the deposit draft plan and the Inspector supported the county council on this.

Attention is drawn to the modified versions of policies W7K and W8A which were recommended by the Inspector (report paras 27.49, last bullet, and 34.49, last bullet). The criteria recommended they address objectors' concerns about incineration and for these to be taken into account if planning applications for incinerators are submitted.

The paragraphs of the Inspector's report are as follows:

*Extracts from Essex local plan report*

5.12 For example, at the inquiry there was more than once quoted to me the parliamentary answer given to Mr. Bob Russell, MP, that "A Way With Waste" creates no obligation to include incineration within waste development plans (doc 2588/PE/1, appendix 5) (and no doubt a similar point could be made with regard to "Waste Strategy 2000"). However I think that is not the point. Nobody can prevent planning applications being submitted for incinerators, and if the plan said nothing about them then it would not provide useful guidance. It would perhaps be entitled to state a presumption against incinerators being permitted, but if it did so this would have to be justified by land use planning considerations, and take account of advice about the relationship between planning and pollution control. I say more about that in part 27. The point here is that the plan should not, in my view, dictate to the WDAs and WCAs what their strategy should be, although it can constrain that strategy within land use planning principles.

*Should there be a policy on incineration?*

27.11 The first issue arises because in schedule 8 the WPAs propose to delete policy W7K and incorporate policy guidance on incineration into policy W8A. The consortium's objection is withdrawn subject to this. This change might be thought to delight many others who do not want to see any policy on incineration in the plan and who quoted in support of their case the parliamentary reply to Bob Russell MP that there is no obligation to include incineration in the plan (see para 5.12). But it seems to me that having no policy on the matter will not necessarily meet objectors' cases.

27.12 There is no doubt that waste incineration is an issue in Essex and Southend. Private companies are interested in building incinerators, as evidenced by the three successful bids in the latest round of NFFO contracts (doc 2588/PE/1, appendix 3). They may decide to submit planning applications, and if the waste local plan provided no guidance as to how such applications would be dealt with, the resulting uncertainty would not be in anyone's interest. As regards household waste, the WDAs, having agreed interim contract strategies up to 2007, are in the process of deciding their strategy for post-2007. Through "Working Together", they have agreed with the WCAs a minimum recycling/composting target of 60 per cent. by 2007, but as I understand it they have not reached any decision to eliminate energy from waste incineration from their strategy. Paragraph 29 of PPG10 advises that waste local plans should ensure an adequate planning framework for the provision of facilities by the waste management industry, and should carefully consider the environmental implications of all waste management proposals. For these reasons it would not be a reasonable option for the plan to ignore incineration.

27.13 I accept that the proposed changes to policy W8A would still refer to incineration. But I do not consider that it would provide proper guidance. Firstly, this policy applies to the waste management sites identified in schedule 1. Planning applications for incinerators might be submitted on other sites, and there would be no policy basis in the plan for determining such applications. Secondly, the additions to policy W8A on incineration have no justification in the supporting text in chapter 8, and indeed, as objectors to this proposed change point out, include new matter on incineration being a last resort which is not justified anywhere in the plan. Thirdly, the supporting text to policy W7K is not proposed for deletion or amendment, yet if the policy were deleted this text would be left hanging in the air. Fourthly, all the other significant waste management processes, including landfill, have explicit policies applying to them. Simply to remove the

incineration policy and include amended parts of it in policy W8A is not therefore in my view an appropriate response to the objections.

27.14 For these reasons I shall not recommend the deletion of policy W7K. In line with the scheme of chapter 7 of the plan for other waste processes, there should be a policy which provides clear guidance for responding to planning applications for incinerators. It is next necessary to consider the content of the policy. To address this, I shall examine in turn the matters included under the second issue listed above.

*Should the policy state a presumption against incinerators? If not, what constraints should be applied?*

27.36 It will be evident from my conclusions on the above issues that I do not consider that the plan should rule out incineration as a matter of principle. I also see no justification for introducing the phrase "as a last resort" proposed in schedule 8. It is not clear what this means: the question of practicable alternatives further up the waste hierarchy would be taken into account anyway under policy W3A. However clear guidance should be provided in policy W7K as to the matters that would be taken into account by the WPAs in dealing with any planning application.

27.37 The definition of these matters follows from the foregoing discussion. Where requirements are common to other forms of waste management, they should be stated in policies W8A and W8B. They would then apply to incineration also, as would be made clear by inserting a cross-reference to those policies in policy W7K. The purpose of policy W7K is to introduce additional requirements specific to incineration, namely consideration of emissions to air or water (see para 27.22) and disposal of residues (see para 27.34). A further matter that I think is best expressed as a requirement is that incineration without energy recovery will not be permitted; but in response to objection from GOER this should be worded to enable an exception to be made in specialised cases. That would conform to para 7.37 of the supporting text, incorporating the modification recommended, which explains the meaning of that term.

27.38 Policy W8B contains criteria for major waste development outside the locations identified in schedule 1. Provided an incinerator proposal met those requirements, I see no justification for precluding it solely on the grounds that it was not on an identified site. It might for example be a smaller scale project, or the location might be a suitable one even though it has not been foreseen in drafting the plan. This is the more so because later in this report I have recommended the deletion of some of the identified sites, and shown that there would be difficulties in accommodating a conventional incinerator at some of the others. It would impose an unfair burden on the remaining sites if the plan did not allow flexibility for alternative locations to come forward. My recommended wording therefore includes a reference to other locations subject to policy W8B, and I consider in part 35 how that policy should be worded. This would meet Mid Essex Gravel's objection. It is perhaps unlikely that an incinerator below 50,000 tpa capacity, to which policy W4B would apply, would be proposed, but to allow for future developments this possibility could be mentioned in supporting text.

27.39 Lastly I pick up some of the other matters raised by objectors. The limited energy efficiency of a conventional incinerator, unless it includes a combined heat and power plant, is a factor that would be taken into account in assessing whether a proposed incinerator was the BPEO, under policy W3A. This factor might be improved by technical innovations. The life of an incinerator would be taken into account at planning application stage, and also, no doubt, by the WDAs when considering waste contracts. The University of Essex and others refer to new quasi-incineration techniques such as pyrolysis or gasification: there is nothing in the plan to preclude these, and insofar as they overcame the problems of conventional incinerators they would to that extent be favoured under the policy. The problems raised by Harlow council are all matters that would be addressed at the application stage under various policies of the plan; the issue of EIA has been covered at part 9. The matters raised by waste industry companies, and also those raised by GOER and the Environment Agency, have already been dealt with.

Policy W7K: delete text and substitute as follows:

Proposals for incineration of waste will be permitted at the locations identified in schedule 1 (subject to compliance with the requirements of policy W8A) or at other locations (subject to the requirements of policy W8B), provided the following requirements are also met:

incineration without energy recovery will not be permitted except in specialised cases;

emissions to air and water from the process will not materially endanger human health or harm the environment. In deciding whether this requirement is met, the WPAs will assume that the necessary controls are exercised under Environmental Protection legislation and that the pollution control regime operates effectively, and will take into account whether the process proposed is the Best Practicable Environmental Option for the particular waste stream; and

provision is made for the recycling or other management of all residues, including the means of disposal to landfill where that is the BPEO.

Policy W8A: delete text and substitute as follows:

Waste management facilities will be permitted at the locations shown in schedule 1 provided all of the following criteria, where relevant, are complied with:

there is a need for the facility to manage waste arising in Essex and Southend (subject to policy W3C);

the proposal represents the Best Practicable Environmental Option for the particular waste stream, having regard to any alternative options further up the waste hierarchy;

the development complies with other relevant policies of this plan, including the policy/ies in chapter 7 for the type(s) of facility proposed;

adequate road access is provided in accordance with policy W4E. Access by rail or water will be supported if practicable;

buildings and structures are of a high standard of design, with landscaping and screening provided as necessary; and

integrated schemes for recycling, composting, materials recovery and energy recovery from waste will be supported where this is shown to provide benefits in the management of waste which would not otherwise be obtained.

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what powers inspectors appointed to oversee the drawing up of county waste plans have to overrule decisions of the councils concerned. [5197]

**Ms Keeble** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I have been asked to reply.

The role of a Local Plan Inspector is prescribed in the Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) (England) Regulations 1999 and set out more informally in the Green Book, "Local Plans and Unitary Development Plans: A Guide to Procedures". Essentially it is to hold the inquiry and report to the council with recommendations as to the action they should take with respect to each of the objections. The council must decide whether or not to accept the Inspector's recommendations. They may decide not to do so but must give their reasons for this. The council will normally propose modifications to the Plan in accordance with their decisions on the Inspector's recommendations, prior to adopting the Plan.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Rural Payments Agency

**Mr. Ivan Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what targets she has set for the Rural Payments Agency for 2001–02. [8746]

**Margaret Beckett:** I have set the Rural Payments Agency the following performance targets for 2001–02.

*Issues and Aims*

*Operational Service Performance*

To process at least 98.5 per cent. of valid claims correctly and in doing so:

To process at least 96.14 per cent. of IACS claims by value within the EU deadline.

To process at least 98 per cent. of CAP claims within ministerial deadlines and all claims within the set EU Commission deadlines or in their absence 60 days.

To carry out 100 per cent. on-the-spot inspections for CAP schemes in accordance with EU targets, subject to agreed derogations.

To meet all targets set for customer service.

*Financial and control performance*

To operate within the resource and cash allocations in RPA's Request for Resources (RfR), as agreed with DEFRA.

To agree and implement a comprehensive RPA Risk Management Plan by 31 March 2002.

To implement procedures for the production of a statement of internal controls as part of the audited annual report and accounts for 2001–02.

To obtain full paying Agency accreditation from the Competent Authority from 16 October 2001.

To ensure that disallowance within the control of RPA remains below 0.5 per cent. of the value of CAP payments made by the Agency.

*Fair, responsive quality services performance*

To develop and operate a procedure for handling complaints that will be transparent and efficient and compliant with best practice as identified by the Cabinet Office. RPA will also participate in any mechanism that is operated by the Department and the Devolved Administrations that provides an opportunity for independent evaluation of an appeal.

To develop the use of the Industry Forum set up in August 2001 and by 31 March 2002, to establish additional further specialist sub-groups in support to enable close and effective communication with, and involvement of all RPA customers.

To develop and implement a RPA Quality Strategy by 31 March 2002.

*Efficiency performance*

RPA Change Programme to deliver change programmes as identified in programme plan and in the Corporate Plan for 2001–02.

To deliver key milestones of the RPA change programme, as agreed with the Regional Overview Board.

To maintain/ensure business continuity and customer satisfaction during the RPA change programme.

*Policy advice*

To meet the needs of policy divisions in providing operational advice in support of CAP policy formation.

*Valuing staff*

To implement an action plan to remain accredited following the IiP review in February 2002 and the plan for the culture change programme.

To continue the roll out of Diversity workshops with the intention to achieve 80 per cent. coverage of all management staff by 31 March 2002.

## Foot and Mouth

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how long foot and mouth disease can remain active in the digestive tract and faeces of *(a)* carrion crows and *(b)* foxes. [5255]

**Mr. Morley:** These species are not susceptible to infection by the foot and mouth disease virus. If they ingest the virus there is no true infection or colonisation of the digestive tract. If the virus is ingested, any remaining virus particles, which have survived the activities of digestion, will only persist in the gut for a day or two and will be excreted naturally. However, crows and foxes are not capable of excreting sufficient virus to infect one of the farm species.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations she has received on the handling by her Department of the foot and mouth outbreak. [5436]

**Mr. Morley:** The Department has received representations from an extremely wide range of interested parties on all aspects of the foot and mouth outbreak. Since the start of the outbreak, we have regularly consulted a wide range of stakeholders and worked closely with them in the development of our disease control policies.

**David Maclean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will bring forward specific proposals to assist the local parish council surrounding the Great Orton disposal site. [5548]

**Mr. Morley:** The Department has engaged consultants to prepare detailed restoration and aftercare proposals for the site. The final form of the proposal is nearing completion and in the very near future a copy of the formal proposals will be submitted for approval by the Cumbria county council. Part of this process will involve the county council consulting a number of statutory agencies, the local council and the local parish council for their views.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the reasons were for the decision to scrap the EpiMan data management and prediction system for controlling a major foot and mouth epidemic. [7727]

**Mr. Morley:** The EpiMan data management and prediction system was not scrapped. The modelling component (Interspread) for evaluating control measures and predicting the future course of the epidemic has been used extensively and almost on a daily basis. One scientific paper has been published describing its use during the early stages of the epidemic. The data management component was not used in full as it was designed to administer all tracings associated with Infected Premises and other control activities from a central disease control centre. The widespread geographical distribution of infection did not lend itself to such a central administration. Staff in DEFRA built on their experiences from dealing with the outbreak of classical swine fever and produced a generic disease control database, which has proved to be of great benefit.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the estimated cost to the economy is of the foot and mouth disease outbreak to date. [7731]

**Mr. Morley:** I am very much aware that the outbreak is having a considerable impact on farming and a range of industries throughout the UK. However, it is not possible, at this stage, to make a reliable estimate of the longer-term economic consequences. Work is in hand to complete a national assessment, the details of which will be made publicly available.

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what is the total amount of compensation so far paid to farmers following the foot and mouth outbreak. [7666]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The total amount paid in statutory compensation in Great Britain as at 10 October is £1,047,102,708. This comprises £1,020,769,169 for animal compensation payments and £26,333,152 for items seized and destroyed such as hay, feed, fodder and semen straws.

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what arrangements she has made to encourage *(a)* individuals, *(b)* companies and *(c)* organisations affected by foot and mouth disease to submit evidence to the inquiries the Government have established; and if she will make a statement. [8043]

**Mr. Morley:** The inquiries which the Government have announced into the current foot and mouth disease epidemic are independent. It would, therefore, be inappropriate for DEFRA to decide how to encourage any person, company or organisation to submit evidence. It is for the chairmen of the independent inquiries to encourage interested parties to submit their views.

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what arrangements she has made for the Government inquiries into foot and mouth disease to receive representations from hon. Members; and if she will make a statement. [8040]

**Mr. Morley:** The inquiries into the current foot and mouth disease epidemic are independent. It is for the Chairmen to decide on how to receive any representations.

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what contribution her Department is making to the research being undertaken to develop a vaccine against foot and mouth disease, which does not result in a carrier state. [6486]

**Mr. Morley:** As yet no vaccine is available that can provide a guarantee of preventing the carrier state. The Department is funding a programme of research on foot and mouth disease, concentrating on (i) vaccine development, (ii) molecular structure of the virus (iii) improved diagnosis and (iv) epidemiology. During the current financial year, we are committed to spend just over £900,000 on this programme, of which £268,000 will be devoted to three projects on vaccine development. In addition, one project from the 'improved diagnosis' programme is specifically examining the carrier state in cattle. The Department has also received six proposals for future research and development into vaccine development and use.

**Mr. Heath:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when she expects that Somerset will be adjudged not to have high risk status in respect of foot and mouth disease. [7889]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 15 July 2001]:* The county of Somerset was classified as foot and mouth disease free from 9 October, while the single unitary authority of Bath and North East Somerset was declared foot and mouth disease free on 11 September. The unitary authority of North Somerset was classified as foot and mouth disease free on 16 October 2001.

### Combined Heat and Power

**Joan Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much CHP capacity has been put out of service since the new electricity trading arrangements came into effect. [5181]

**Mr. Meacher:** No information is available on whether any CHP capacity has been decommissioned since the introduction of NETA. However, the recent report by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, "Report to DTI on the Review of the Initial Impact of NETA on Smaller Generators", issued last month, indicates that the export of power from CHP has reduced by around 60 per cent.

### Energy Efficiency (Government Estate)

**Mr. Colman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans the Government have to legislate for a 30 per cent. improvement in the energy efficiency of the Government Estate. [5669]

**Mr. Meacher** *[holding answer 20 July 2001]:* Further to the current 20 per cent. improvement target, we are developing new realistic, but challenging energy efficiency targets for the Government estate. These will be based on an assessment of the estate's performance against national standards, which will be available next year.

We are currently analysing the latest information about the estate's energy efficiency performance over the past decade, details of which will be announced next month.

### Livestock Markets

**Mr. Heath:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what her policy is on the resumption of operation of livestock markets. [7891]

**Mr. Morley** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Veterinary and scientific advice is that there is an inherent risk of spreading the disease by mixing animals together and then dispersing them. Any livestock keeper with poor standards of biosecurity might attend markets from anywhere in the country and put at risk others attending the market. Even in designated free counties, it would take only one such lapse in biosecurity precautions to spread disease. It is right to be cautious at this stage but the situation will be kept under review.

## WALES

### Tourism

9. **Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on support for small businesses in the tourism sector in Wales. [4199]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I regularly meet the First Secretary of the National Assembly to discuss a variety of issues, including the tourism sector in Wales.

Over the last six months, I have made many visits to different parts of Wales, meeting representatives of local business communities, hoteliers and other organisations to listen to their concerns.

12. **Mrs. Betty Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on financial assistance for small businesses in the tourism sector which have been affected by foot and mouth disease. [4202]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I have regular meetings with the First Secretary to discuss a variety of issues, including the tourism sector in Wales.

The Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Touhig), recently visited my hon. Friend's constituency and met representatives of the local business community, hoteliers and other organisations to listen to their concerns on the effects of FMD on the local economy.

17. **Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the use of the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme for promotion of businesses in tourism. [4208]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** The Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme, a UK-wide scheme, is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

This scheme, which has been running since 1981, helps viable small firms access loans where conventional finance is unavailable because of a lack of security. Under standard scheme terms and conditions many business sectors are eligible including some within tourism.

The scheme was temporarily extended in April 2001 to assist businesses affected by the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Coverage was extended to a number of business sectors normally excluded, including retailing, catering and others within tourism.

### Health Service

10. **Mr. Bryant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly for Wales on the health service in Wales. [4200]

24. **Ann Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on the health service in Wales. [4215]

**Mr. Touhig:** My right hon. Friend and I meet regularly the National Assembly First Minister and the Assembly Health and Social Services Minister to discuss the NHS in Wales.

As my hon. Friends know the NHS (Wales) Bill received advance- drafting authority and we have therefore been in constant touch in order to make progress.

### Transport

11. **Donald Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on transport in Wales. [4201]

**Mr. Touhig:** My right hon. Friend meets the First Secretary of the National Assembly on a regular basis to discuss wide-ranging current issues affecting Wales, including transport.

Transport generally is a matter for the National Assembly, though railways, air and ports remain, generally, the responsibility of Central Government, working closely with the Assembly on matters affecting Wales. I am keen to continue dialogue with the Assembly and Cabinet colleagues in order to determine how best to meet the transport needs of Wales.

27. **Mr. Edwards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on transport in Wales. [4218]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I meet the First Secretary of the National Assembly on a regular basis to discuss wide-ranging current issues affecting Wales, including transport.

Transport generally is a matter for the National Assembly, though railways, air and ports remain, generally, the responsibility of Central Government, working closely with the Assembly on matters affecting Wales. I am keen to continue dialogue with the Assembly and Cabinet colleagues in order to determine how best to meet the transport needs of Wales.

### Manufacturing Industry

13. **Kevin Brennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on manufacturing industry in Wales. [4203]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I meet the First Secretary regularly to discuss a range of issues, including manufacturing in Wales.

I am pleased to note the announcement of some 7,500 jobs in manufacturing operations across Wales in the past 12 months, particularly in the light of heavy job losses in the steel sector.

18. **Mrs. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on manufacturing industry in Wales. [4209]

28. **Mark Tami:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on the manufacturing industry in Wales. [4219]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I meet the First Secretary regularly to discuss a range of issues, including manufacturing in Wales.

I am pleased to note the announcement of some 7,500 jobs in manufacturing operations across Wales in the past 12 months.

19. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on manufacturing employment in Wales. [4210]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I am pleased to note the announcement of some 7,500 jobs in manufacturing operations across Wales in the past 12 months.

### Higher Education

14. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about higher education in Wales. [4205]

**Mr. Touhig:** My right hon. Friend and I have had a number of meetings and discussions recently to discuss education in Wales. These discussions have included the provision of higher education.

The Assembly's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee is conducting a comprehensive policy review of higher education in Wales, to inform a 10-year strategy for the sector. The review's findings are expected later this year.

### Environment

15. **Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the mechanisms for determining cross-border environmental issues. [4206]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** Such issues are a matter for the National Assembly for Wales, in discussion with the lead Whitehall Department and where appropriate the Environment Agency. The Wales Office would only become involved if I were asked to intervene to help resolve a difficulty.

### North Wales Young Offenders Team

16. **Ian Lucas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the North Wales young offenders team; and if he will make a statement. [4207]

**Mr. Touhig:** The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales has responsibility for the operation of youth offending teams. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires local authorities to submit a youth justice plan to the Board annually, setting out the composition and funding of youth offending teams and how youth justice services in their areas are to be provided.

I am informed that the Youth Justice Board is aware of the proposals by Wrexham county borough council and Flintshire county council to split into two the present North East Wales Youth Offending Team. It is for the Board to comment on the merits of these proposals.

### Welsh Language (Documents)

20. **Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements are in place to ensure that documents produced by his Department are obtainable in Welsh. [4211]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** Wales Office publications are bilingual and we reply in Welsh to anyone who writes to us in that language. Our translation needs are met partly by the National Assembly for Wales under the terms of a service level agreement and partly by external translators. We are currently preparing a Welsh Language Scheme which will be published for consultation shortly.

### Labour Statistics

21. **Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many job losses have been announced, and how many new jobs have been created, in Blaenau Gwent in the past 12 months. [4212]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** While the figures are not exhaustive, a survey of announcements over the past 12 months suggests that around 1,000 jobs have been lost in Blaenau Gwent and just under 300 new jobs have been announced during this period. While these figures are disappointing, I am pleased to note that the unemployment rate in Blaenau Gwent Unitary Authority has fallen by 0.7 per cent. in the last year.

22. **Mr. David:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the First Secretary of the National Assembly on manufacturing job losses, with special reference to job losses in the Caerphilly county borough. [4213]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I meet the First Secretary regularly to discuss a wide range of issues including manufacturing employment in Wales.

While a number of manufacturing job losses have been announced in Caerphilly and across Wales during the past 12 months, I very much welcome the announcement of continued expansion at Norgine Pharmaceuticals and National Britannia, with a total of 144 jobs to be created in Caerphilly.

### Inward Investment

23. **Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with the First Secretary concerning the level of inward investment in Wales. [4214]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I meet the First Minister regularly to discuss a wide range of issues including inward investment in Wales.

In the past 12 months, Wales has attracted capital investment of £549 million, with nearly 9,000 new jobs created and over 6,000 jobs safeguarded.

### Foot and Mouth

25. **Adam Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with the National Assembly for Wales regarding the state of the rural economy following the outbreak of foot and mouth disease; and if he will make a statement. [4216]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** I have regular discussions with the First Minister on a wide range of issues, including the rural economy in Wales.

The recent declines in rural incomes are attributable to prices for most commodities falling sharply due to market conditions, economic difficulties in Russia and Asia, and

the strength of sterling, as well as the foot and mouth outbreak. We cannot ignore these difficulties, but must respond positively to the challenges. I understand that the National Assembly's Advisory Group is advising on how best to tackle these challenges in a way which best meets the needs of rural Wales.

### Redundant Steel Workers

26. **Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to assist redundant steelworkers in Wales. [4217]

**Mr. Paul Murphy:** On 3 May the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced a number of measures to help individuals and communities affected by redundancies in the steel industry. This included lump sum payments of around £2,500 in social aid. The scheme will be backdated to 1 January 2000.

## SCOTLAND

### Refurbishment Projects

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will list the top 10 companies to which her Department contracted out its construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months. [6615]

**Mrs. Liddell:** My Department has let no contracts for construction and refurbishment work in the last 12 months.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what *(a)* building and *(b)* refurbishment projects are planned by her Department in (i) the current and (ii) the next financial year; and what the costs will be of each project. [6591]

**Mrs. Liddell:** My Department has no building or refurbishment projects planned for this financial year or next, other than on-going minor maintenance work.

### Civil Service (Retirement Age)

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will list the compulsory retirement ages which apply to employees of her Department and of executive agencies and other public sector bodies for which it is responsible, broken down by grade or job title. [7230]

**Mrs. Liddell:** My Department's normal retirement age for all staff is 60. This policy is currently under review in relation to staff below the senior civil service.

The Scotland Office has no executive agencies or other public service bodies.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Fraud

**Liz Blackman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will place the results of the evaluation of the March advertising campaign on targeting fraud in the Library. [8747]

**Mr. Darling:** A report on the results of the evaluation of the March burst of the Targeting Fraud Advertising Campaign has been placed in the Library.

### Remploy

**Liz Blackman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what Remploy's performance has been against the targets set in their 2000–01 Annual Performance Agreement. [8748]

**Maria Eagle:** Remploy published its Report and Accounts for 2000–01 in July and copies have been placed in the Library. The targets and achievements are set out in the table.

| | *Target* | *Achievement* |
|---|---|---|
| The average number of disabled people employed by Remploy | [1]10,400 | 10,423 |
| Average number of disabled people employed under the Interwork Scheme | [1]4,400 | 4,403 |
| The number of disabled employees to move from Remploy factories to Interwork having been employed there for at least six months, or from Interwork or factories to open employment | [1]700 | 774 |
| Remploy will keep within a unit cost target (operating deficit per disabled worker) of: | £9,600 | £9,580 |

[1] at least

### Invalid Care Allowance

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what representations he has received from carers' organisations regarding an increase in the invalid care allowance; and if he will make a statement. [7507]

**Maria Eagle:** We have received from carers' organisations a number of representations on this and other aspects of financial support for carers. Some of these were in response to the Government's recent consultation on our proposed changes to provide entitlement to Invalid Care Allowance (ICA) to those aged over 65, to make the benefit payable for 8 weeks after the death of the person being cared for, and to change its name to the more appropriate "Carer's Allowance". These enhancements to ICA, which are part of a £500 million per annum package of benefit improvements announced last Autumn, will be introduced shortly by means of a Regulatory Reform Order.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Ynys Môn

Q7. **Albert Owen:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit the Ynys Môn constituency in the near future. [4226]

**The Prime Minister:** I have no plans at present to do so.

### Housing Rents (London)

Q11. **Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what actions are being taken by the Government to ensure that the number of affordable rented houses in London increases. [4230]

**The Prime Minister:** We have reversed the decline in housing investment by the previous Administration with a massive programme to improve the quantity and quality of social housing in London. We are actively working with others, including the Mayor, on measures to increase the provision of housing, including affordable housing, in London. We have also just announced the allocations for our Starter Homes Initiative which will help to expand the supply of housing to key workers in the capital.

### NHS Beds (Oxfordshire)

Q12. **Dr. Evan Harris:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of NHS beds in Oxfordshire. [4231]

**The Prime Minister:** In August 2001, an assessment made in accordance with the recommendations of the National Beds Inquiry showed that Oxfordshire needed a further 151 beds to reach its recommended number. A more detailed assessment process is now being developed to ensure that the right capacity exists to meet the needs of patients in Oxfordshire. Action is already being taken to address the capacity problem, and current plans include an increase of 48 surgical beds at the John Radcliffe Hospital by spring 2003 and an increase of 18 beds in Bicester by autumn 2004.

### Experience Corps

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Prime Minister which Minister has responsibility for the operation of the Experience Corps. [8453]

**The Prime Minister:** The Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Angela Eagle), has responsibility for the Experience Corps.

### Devolved Administrations

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister what his policy is with regard to *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in his Department giving evidence to (i) Scottish Parliament, (ii) Welsh Assembly and (iii) Northern Ireland Assembly Committees; and to what categories of document he gives (A) full access, (B) restricted access and (C) no access to (1) Scottish Parliament, (2) Welsh Assembly, (3) Northern Ireland Assembly and (4) House of Commons Select Committees. [7018]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Cabinet Office on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 1003–04W.

### Public Sector (Retirement)

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Prime Minister what proportion of public sector employees in work are due to retire in the next *(a)* five, *(b)* 10 and *(c)* 15 years. [8028]

**Ruth Kelly:** I have been asked to reply.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) can provide estimates of the total number of employees in the public sector due to reach state retirement age in the next five, 10 and 15 years. That is, men aged 60–64, 55–64, and 50–64 and women aged 55–59, 50–59 and 45–59 respectively. Estimates for the number of employees in the public sector for the age breakdowns and their proportions of the total number of employees of working age in the public sector are shown in the table.

The LFS does not collect information on the retirement intentions of individuals.

*Proportion of public sector employees of working age reaching state retirement age in the next five, 10 and 15 years, spring[1,2] 2001—United Kingdom*

| | *Thousand* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| *All persons* | | |
| Five years | 465 | 7.4 |
| 10 years | 1,252 | 20.0 |
| 15 years | 2,172 | 34.6 |
| *Men* | | |
| Five years | 111 | 4.6 |
| 10 years | 322 | 13.4 |
| 15 years | 648 | 27.0 |
| *Women* | | |
| Five years | 355 | 9.1 |
| 10 years | 931 | 24.0 |
| 15 years | 1,525 | 39.3 |

[1] March to May
[2] Not seasonally adjusted
*Note:*
Percentages are based on the total number of public sector employees in the relevant age group as a percentage of all employees in the public sector
*Source:*
ONS—Labour Force Survey

## TREASURY

### Split Level Investment Trusts

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what steps are being taken by the Treasury and the FSA to investigate *(a)* mis-selling and *(b)* financial solvency in respect of split level investment trusts; [7504]

(2) what investigations have been carried out by the Treasury and the FSA into the possible mis-selling of zero coupon preference shares by investment trusts. [7505]

**Ruth Kelly:** I understand from the Financial Services Authority that they have been considering for some time the sale of 'exotic' products, including split capital investment trusts, to retail investors. It issued a Consumer Alert on 9 March 2001, entitled "Be wary of exotic ISAs, warns financial watchdog". In March 2001, it also issued specific guidance to financial advisers, reminding them of their responsibility to ensure that investors are aware of the risks involved in purchasing split capital investment trusts.

### Employment Tax Credits

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with carers' organisations as part of the consultation on employment tax credits. [7511]

**Dawn Primarolo:** Throughout 2001, I have met a wide range of interested groups and individuals, including representatives from carers' organisations and disability groups, to discuss all aspects of the new tax credits proposals.

### Departmental Staff

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate total annual staff costs for his Department and its agencies by nation and region of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6871]

**Ruth Kelly:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 1009–12W.

### Departmental Spending

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the total expenditure was on *(a)* advertising, *(b)* polling, *(c)* focus groups, *(d)* design consultants, *(e)* caterers, *(f)* production of departmental publications and *(g)* photographs/photographers by his Department for each year since 1995 in (i) cash and (ii) real terms; what was (A) the annual percentage increase in spending on each category and (B) spending on each category as a percentage of the total departmental running costs; and if he will make a statement. [6878]

**Ruth Kelly:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 1009–12W.

### Customs and Excise, Shrewsbury

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the maximum distance is that employees at Her Majesty's Customs and Excise office in Shrewsbury would be expected to travel if alternative work were found for them. [7142]

**Mr. Boateng:** Staff could be moved to another office within reasonable daily travel, which is defined as within 90 minutes' travelling time each way from home, taking into account the personal and domestic circumstances of each member of staff.

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when the review into workloads will be completed at Her Majesty's Customs and Excise office in Shrewsbury; [7139]

(2) if he will publish the brief given to the regional director undertaking the review into workloads at Her Majesty's Customs and Excise office in Shrewsbury. [7140]

**Mr. Boateng:** There is no review into workloads at the HM Customs and Excise Shrewsbury office.

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the proposed reduction in work at HM Customs and Excise office in Shrewsbury. [7137]

**Mr. Boateng:** HM Customs and Excise are pursuing a number of initiatives to improve their service to business and achieve efficiency improvements. Reductions in personnel at Shrewsbury are related to the programme to concentrate the work of Debt Management Units from 29 sites into 10. As a result HM Customs and Excise announced that the DMU at their Shrewsbury office will close on 31 March 2002, affecting 32 staff.

However, Customs have no plans to close the Shrewsbury office. Customs are also exploring options with other Government Departments and agencies. Their aim remains to avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of redundancies at Her Majesty's Customs and Excise office in Shrewsbury if replacement work is not found. [7141]

**Mr. Boateng:** HM Customs and Excise's policy is to avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible. They are not in a position to estimate whether or not there will be any redundancies at Shrewsbury until all the other options have been exhausted.

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken to introduce new work at HM Customs and Excise office in Shrewsbury. [7138]

**Mr. Boateng:** HM Customs and Excise are undertaking a national review of Regional Business Services work that does not have to be based at a particular location. This may result in that work being pooled or concentrated in particular sites. Shrewsbury will be given equal consideration alongside similar locations as part of that review.

### Foot and Mouth

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of Government payments arising from the foot and mouth outbreak in the financial year 2001–02 expressed *(a)* gross and *(b)* net of reimbursement from the European Commission; and what the total cost is. [8015]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** The costs of FMD for the full financial year are not yet known and cannot be reliably estimated. Up to 10 October, the Government had spent £1.5 billion on eradicating foot and mouth, of which just over £1 billion has been on compensation to farmers. In addition, £308 million had been spent on the Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme, and the Government have put in place several measures to help the countryside recover from foot and mouth disease, including: deferral of tax, VAT and National Insurance contributions which has helped over 18,000 businesses; establishment of a £50 million Business Recovery Fund; establishment of rate relief scheme covering affected areas; establishment of a matched funding scheme for charitable donations; and the Government making additional lending available through the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme.

The UK is eligible for reimbursement from the European Commission of 60 per cent of the costs of compensation for the slaughter and destruction of animals, cleansing and disinfecting of holdings and equipment and the transport of carcases. The EC have approved an initial payment of euro 355 million, and we anticipate a further payment being made during 2002.

### Scottish Executive

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been paid at current prices by HM Treasury

to the Scottish Executive outside the block grant since 1 July 1999; and if he will place in the Library a list of all the major items included in that additional expenditure. [7781]

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** Nothing—all funding by the Government of the Scottish Executive since 1 July 1999 has been by means of the block grant.

### Air Passenger Duty

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the benefits of using revenues from air passenger duty to assist British airlines during their current financial difficulties. [7673]

**Mr. Boateng:** The Government will continue to consider any appropriate means of providing support to the airlines industry during the current period. However, at this time, the Government do not think that hypothecating revenues raised from air passenger duty to the airlines industry would be an appropriate or efficient means of support. In general, the way in which Government revenues are raised should not determine where they are spent.

### Equitable Life

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reasons the appointed actuary of Equitable Life has given to the FSA for the change in his assessment of *(a)* the valuation of the with-profits fund and *(b)* the company's financial position, that prompted the company to downgrade its terminal bonus guidelines by 16 per cent. [7058]

**Ruth Kelly:** The reduction in policy value was, the Equitable has publicly said,

> "vital for the long-term interests of the Society and all its policyholders. The decision was taken . . . because stock markets have fallen heavily over the last 18 months; maturity values now significantly exceed the value of the investments underlying maturing policies; as a mature fund, a large number of policyholders are currently retiring and taking their benefits."

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what questions the FSA raised with Equitable Life about the values assigned to policyholders' final bonus levels in its *(a)* with-profits fund and *(b)* GAR fund since January 2000; [6623]

(2) what assessments the FSA made, on what bases and on which dates, of the adequacy of the reserves of Equitable Life to meet the liabilities it faced from its guaranteed annuity rate policies, between 1 January 1999 and 8 December 2000. [7057]

**Ruth Kelly:** This is an issue which Lord Penrose may wish to consider in his inquiry into the events surrounding Equitable Life.

**Mr. Russell Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he will provide to Lord Penrose's inquiry into Equitable Life; and if he will publish it. [8280]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Government are submitting to Lord Penrose the report of the Financial Services Authority on the review of the regulation of Equitable Life from January 1999 to December 2000. The report has been presented to Parliament and is being published today (as House of Commons Paper 244). Copies are available in the Vote Office.

### Insurance Company Actuaries

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will change the reporting obligations of appointed actuaries of insurance companies so that all material changes in the financial position of a company must be notified to the Financial Services Authority in between annual reporting dates. [7061]

**Ruth Kelly:** Sections 342 and 343 of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 provide HM Treasury with powers to make regulations specifying the circumstances in which appointed actuaries of insurance companies must make a report to the Financial Services Authority. The Treasury intends to make such regulations, but before doing so it wants to give interested parties an opportunity to comment on its proposals. These proposals are set out in a consultation document which will be published by HM Treasury in the near future.

### Insurance Companies (Negligence)

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will impose upon the auditors and audit committees of insurance companies a duty of care to the Financial Services Authority qua regulator, making them liable for negligence; [7059]

(2) if he will impose upon the appointed actuaries of insurance companies a duty of care to the Financial Services Authority qua regulator, making them liable for negligence. [7060]

**Ruth Kelly:** This is an issue which Lord Penrose may wish to consider in his inquiry into the events surrounding Equitable Life.

### Airline Insurance

**Mr. Bercow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the forecast average monthly cost of the airline insurance guarantee is. [7778]

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the limit of Government contingent liabilities is under *(a)* Pool Re and *(b)* the cover provided to the aviation industry to insure against terrorist risk; and how these commitments will be reported in Government accounts. [8017]

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements have been made with the airline industry to ensure that passengers travelling out of the UK while airline insurance is underwritten by Her Majesty's Government will be able to return to the UK after the expiry of the current arrangements. [7482]

**Mr. Andrew Smith** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* There is no limit to the Government contingent liability under the arrangements with the re-insurer, Pool Re, or the cover provided to the airline industry. Full details of the liabilities will be submitted to the Parliamentary Accounts Committee in accordance with normal procedures.

The cost of the airline insurance guarantee is mainly in the form of actual liabilities. Costs cannot be quantified in advance of any claim being made.

The airline insurance guarantee established by HM Treasury will run for 30 days from 11.59 GMT 24 September, and there is an option for renewal on seven days' notice for a further 30-day period if it is evident that adequate insurance is not available.

## Treasury Select Committee Report

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Government will respond to the Treasury Committee's Tenth report for the Session 2000–01. [8749]

**Ruth Kelly:** The Government response has been delivered to the Committee today and a copy has been deposited in the Library of the House.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 18 October 2001*

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### Sustainable Agriculture

11. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what further initiatives she intends to introduce to encourage more environmentally friendly agriculture. [R] [4678]

**Alun Michael:** The Government are committed to developing a more sustainable agricultural industry. Improving the environment is one element of sustainable agriculture and we have an expanding programme of measures in place.

We know there is more to do and expect that the independent Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food will propose new and innovative ideas to develop a more sustainable agricultural industry.

### Foot and Mouth

12. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many compensation claims for foot and mouth disease are outstanding in respect of farmers in Chorley. [4679]

**Mr. Morley:** The Department has no outstanding claims for compensation for slaughtered livestock from farmers in Chorley.

15. **Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the foot and mouth crisis. [4684]

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on foot and mouth disease. [4699]

**Margaret Beckett:** For almost two months, cases of foot and mouth disease have continued to occur but have been confined to two "hotspots" in Cumbria and Northumberland. However there is no room for complacency and farmers should continue with the biosecurity measures issued by the Department.

19. **Mr. Roger Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the long-term economic impact of the foot and mouth outbreak on mid-Wales farming and other rural businesses in mid-Wales. [4689]

**Alun Michael:** The outbreak is having a considerable impact on farming and a range of industries throughout the UK and this is certainly reflected in the impact in mid-Wales. It is not possible, at this stage, to make a reliable estimate of the longer-term economic consequences. Work is in hand to complete a national assessment, the details of which will be made available to the public.

23. **Dr. Julian Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the impact of foot and mouth disease on rural small businesses. [4694]

**Alun Michael:** Foot and mouth disease has had a massive impact on the rural economy including tourism and other non-farm businesses, even in areas with few FMD cases. The Rural Task Force was set up to advise on the impact of foot and mouth disease on the rural economy and the report reflects the way in which a variety of interests have been willing to work together to tackle the problems.

24. **Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has received on her Department's handling of the foot and mouth epidemic. [4695]

**Margaret Beckett:** The Department has received representations from an extremely wide range of interested parties on all aspects of the foot and mouth outbreak. Since the start of the outbreak, we have regularly consulted a wide range of stakeholders and worked closely with them in the development of our disease control polices.

28. **Mr. Simon Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the economic impact of foot and mouth disease. [4703]

**Margaret Beckett:** I am very much aware that the outbreak is having a considerable impact on farming and a range of industries throughout the UK. However, it is not possible, at this stage, to make a reliable estimate of the longer-term economic consequences. Work is in hand to complete a national assessment, the details of which will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many footpaths have been re-opened since the outbreak of foot and mouth. [7698]

**Alun Michael:** The precise success in re-opening footpaths has been measured in percentage terms rather than in terms of the number of footpaths, which is less meaningful and could be established only at disproportionate cost. The latest available figures from the Countryside Agency (11 October) show that 92 per cent. of the footpath network in England is open again. This corresponds to over 109,000 miles out of a total of 118,248 miles. A list breaking down by local authority the progress made in re-opening footpaths since early July has been placed in the Library of the House.

Most of the remaining closures are in the Infected Areas in the north of England where foot and mouth disease is still active, and where farms are subject to restrictions for disease control purposes. Elsewhere in the country, individual paths may remain closed across farmland that is still subject to "Form A" restrictions, until full cleansing and disinfection procedures have been completed and clearance to re-stock has been given. There

may also be a few paths closed where there is assessed to be a greater risk from foot and mouth disease, such as pig units, or for the protection of specific rare breeds of susceptible animals.

**John Mann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what support her Department is giving to the Youth Hostels Association consequent upon the restrictions on countryside access imposed to combat the spread of foot and mouth disease. [8179]

**Alun Michael:** We are well aware of the impact that foot and mouth disease and the measures to control it have had on the Youth Hostels Association's finances. I have met representatives of the YHA to discuss their difficulties and possible sources of help, and the Minister responsible for tourism is due to meet them shortly. We are considering, in the light of the recommendations of the Rural Task Force published yesterday, what further help might be made available to the YHA.

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will publish the cost of hiring privately owned land to incinerate slaughtered livestock during the foot and mouth crisis. [7760]

**Mr. Morley:** The cost of hiring privately owned land which has been used, at least in part, for incineration of slaughtered livestock during the foot and mouth epidemic is £741,905. Some of this was farmland with payment to the farmer.

### Animal Transportation

13. **Mr. Prosser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to place further restrictions on the transportation of live animals. [4680]

**Mr. Morley:** There are extensive controls on the transport of livestock. Any further restrictions must be developed and applied on an EU-wide basis. We are pressing the Commission to bring forward proposals for further improvements.

### Regional Issues

14. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what regional issues are her responsibility. [4681]

**Alun Michael:** DEFRA sponsors the Regional Development Agencies' rural programme, which this year is contributing £75 million to the rural economy of the English regions, including £39 million to help deal with the effects on rural businesses of foot and mouth disease.

### Rural White Paper

16. **Alistair Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations she has received from North-East Bedfordshire in respect of the Rural White Paper. [4685]

**Alun Michael:** The Department has not received any representations recently from North-East Bedfordshire in respect of the Rural White Paper.

### Hedgerows

17. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she proposes to retain and enhance hedgerows. [4686]

**Mr. Meacher:** The current combination of expanded agri-environmental incentives, good conservation advice and legal protection for important hedgerows is intended to ensure that we increase and improve our stock of these valuable countryside features.

### Fruit and Vegetables

18. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many tons of fruit and vegetables were disposed of in the EU in the last financial year; and what the totals were for each item. [4687]

**Margaret Beckett:** Provisional figures indicate that some 1.3 million tonnes of fruit and vegetables were withdrawn from the EU market between 1 April 2000 and 31 March 2001. Just under 10,000 tonnes of this were withdrawn in the UK, 10 per cent. of which was distributed free or used for animal feed. Information on the quantity of individual products will be placed in the Library of the House.

| *Product* | *Tonnes withdrawn in EU* | *Tonnes withdrawn in UK* |
|---|---|---|
| Cauliflowers | 47,777 | 7,779 |
| Tomatoes | 153,717 | — |
| Apples | 269,145 | 161 |
| Grapes | 59 | — |
| Apricots | 15,043 | — |
| Nectarines | 118,354 | — |
| Peaches | 255,628 | — |
| Pears | 91,082 | 1,977 |
| Aubergines | 1,802 | — |
| Melons | 14,435 | — |
| Water melons | 10,610 | — |
| Oranges | 229,980 | — |
| Mandarins | 3,562 | — |
| Clementines | 90,595 | — |
| Satsumas | 6,663 | — |
| Lemons | 9,474 | — |

### Non-food Crops

20. **Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what work programme she has approved for the forum on non-food crops. [4690]

**Margaret Beckett:** The forum on non-food uses of crops has been set up to provide strategic advice to Government and industry. Its current work programme is focusing on case studies including biopackaging, fibre for the car industry and wool. Full details are on the forum's website www.defra.gov.uk/farm/gifnfc.

### Recycling

21. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the United Kingdom targets for packaging recycling. [4691]

**Mr. Meacher:** The Government are currently consulting on recovery and recycling targets for packaging waste in 2002.

### Landfill Sites

22. **Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will introduce measures to discourage the transport of waste to landfill sites and incinerators. [4693]

**Margaret Beckett:** The proximity principle set out in the Waste Strategy 2000 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 10 requires that waste should generally be disposed of as near as possible to its place of production, because transporting waste itself has an environmental impact.

The Waste Strategy 2000 also sets out the many steps Government are taking to encourage diversion of waste to recycling.

### Animal Welfare

25. **Dr. Palmer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will take further steps to encourage the market in meat produced to high standards of animal welfare. [4698]

**Mr. Morley:** The Government recognise the importance of standards of production for consumers and the market. We therefore welcome all industry initiatives to enhance further welfare standards and to highlight those standards to consumers. Financial assistance towards such initiatives is available through the England Rural Development Programme. It includes schemes which assist improved processing and marketing of quality products from welfare friendly systems, and related training for farmers

**Mr. Collins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on her plans to minimise animal welfare problems in south Cumbria. [7517]

**Mr. Morley:** Our priority is to win the battle against foot and mouth disease. But we have provided for various animal movements schemes in order to overcome welfare problems. And in extreme cases, the Livestock Welfare Disposal Scheme remains in place.

### Farmers' Incomes

27. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the change in farmers' average incomes since 1997. [4701]

**Margaret Beckett:** Average total income from farming per average full-time person engaged in agriculture has fallen by 41 per cent. in real terms from 1997 to 2000.

### Fishing

29. **Mr. Blizzard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to ensure the future sustainability of the fishing industry in England. [4704]

**Mr. Morley:** It is a key DEFRA objective to promote the sustainable use of fish resources. We will do this in particular by improving the management of fish stocks and by bringing the capacity of the fleet into better balance with fishing opportunities. We will play a full role, in partnership with the industry, in the forthcoming EU review of the Common Fisheries Policy and in further work on stock recovery plans.

### Common Fisheries Policy

30. **Andrew George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent assessment she has made of the European Commission Green Paper on the reform of the common fisheries policy. [4705]

**Mr. Morley:** We welcome the analysis contained within the Commission Green Paper. The Commission correctly identifies many of the significant weaknesses in the current operation of the CFP; sets out those existing elements of the policy, such as relative stability and access restrictions in the six-twelve mile zone, which should be continued; establishes a convincing case for revising the objectives of the CFP; and outlines a number of useful new ideas which must be carefully examined in the course of the Review. Our formal response is available in the Libraries of the House.

### Grass Lets

31. **Mr. Russell Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to offer compensation to farmers who have lost their income from grass lets. [4706]

**Mr. Morley:** My officials are in touch with the Arthur Rank Foundation and with industry bodies about the work of the ARF's National Fodder Bureau and Government match funding for this charitable work. This involves the purchase of farmers' surplus fodder and brokerage to those with more animals than anticipated (due to foot and mouth disease movement restrictions).

### Climate Change

32. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on her participation in international negotiations on climate change. [4707]

**Margaret Beckett:** I attended the resumed Sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn in July and I will be attending the Seventh Conference of the Parties to be held in Marrakesh in November.

### High Hedges Bill

**Hugh Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans the Government have to reintroduce the High Hedges Bill. [8219]

**Ms Keeble:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Kidney) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 884W.

### Salmon Farming

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has for reducing the waste produced from salmon farming; and if she will make a statement. [5282]

**Mrs. Liddell** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* I have been asked to reply.

This is predominantly a matter for the devolved Administration in Scotland. I understand however that a range of initiatives are underway to ensure that salmon farming is undertaken sustainably, with regard both to economic benefit and effect on the environment.

### Rural Taskforce

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when the report of the rural taskforce will be published. [9041]

**Alun Michael:** The report is being published today. Arrangements have been made for copies to be placed in the House Library.

### Renewable Energy

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps the Government have taken to promote renewable forms of energy in the United Kingdom in the last three years; and if she will make a statement. [8085]

**Mr. Wilson:** I have been asked to reply.

In the last three years my Department has taken a number of steps to promote renewable forms of energy in the United Kingdom. Renewable sources of energy have received support of around £208 million over the last three years under the Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO) arrangements. As of 31 March 2001, 366 NFFO projects had been commissioned, representing an installed capacity of around 934 MW (declared net capacity). In addition, my Department's Sustainable Energy Programme has invested a further £36.9 million into R&D activities. Indeed, the period from 1998–2001 saw my Department's budget for renewables rise from £9.7 million to £18 million in the current financial year.

We are now looking to continue to accelerate the development of renewables across a wide range of sources and technologies. We are about to introduce the new Renewables Obligation which will oblige all licensed electricity suppliers to supply a specified and growing proportion of their electricity from renewable sources. Our target for the Obligation is that 10 per cent. of licensed electricity supplies will be generated from eligible renewable sources by 2010.

The introduction of the Renewables Obligation will create a long-term market expected to be worth over £1 billion per year by 2010. Direct government funding for the financial years 2001–2004 will be worth over £260 million and will fund a range of initiatives including my Department's R&D programme, extensive capital grants for offshore wind and energy crops, and a photovoltaic demonstration programme.

### Flood Defences

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans she has to improve flood defences; and if she will make a statement. [7772]

**Mr. Morley:** I plan to reduce risk of flooding by investing in effective flood warning arrangements and in flood defences in the highest risk areas. Funding for the Department's programme is increasing from £66 million in 2000–01 to £114 million in 2003–04.

This Department provides funding to the Environment Agency, local authorities and Internal Drainage Boards for capital flood and coastal defence works that meet certain criteria. Responsibility for deciding which projects to promote and their timing rests with the operating authorities.

### Flood Alleviation

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on farmers' access to funding when they present their land for use with flood alleviation. [8538]

**Mr. Morley:** This Department encourages a strategic approach to management of flood risk through the preparation of Shoreline Management Plans for the coastline and Catchment Flood Management Plans for rivers. These enable the identification of sustainable flood management options, including the possible use of farmland for flood alleviation purposes. In circumstances where quantifiable beneficial use arises, for example acquiring land for the construction or maintenance of defences, payment of compensation is possible. In specified circumstances land may be considered for payment under agri-environment schemes.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on progress towards flood alleviation in the lower Severn area, with specific reference to the introduction of the new computer model to assess risk. [8535]

**Mr. Morley:** We understand that the Environment Agency's Severn Estuary computer model is essentially complete, except for verification of results and some refinement to assess options for flood defences at Gloucester. The initial results are confirming the previous understanding of the levels of protection provided by existing defences. The results will be used to develop the Agency's Tidal Severn Strategy and to feed into feasibility studies for any proposed flood defence works.

### Bovine Tuberculosis

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make a statement on the proposal made in the latest report of the Independent Scientific Group on bovine tuberculosis regarding a suggestion that farmers should be seeking insurance against bovine tuberculosis breakdowns. [8542]

**Mr. Morley:** The third report of the Independent Scientific Group noted both compulsory insurance and compulsory levies as two possible future policy options available for transferring the cost of disease compensation from the public purse to the livestock industry. Neither was a proposal.

They were identified by the group to allow as full a range of potential future policy options as possible to be considered when designing the scientific research programme necessary to underpin consideration of future policy on bovine TB. The chairman's introduction to the report made this clear.

Consideration of whether or not these or other policy options are appropriate for the control of bovine TB will take place when lessons learned from foot and mouth, CSF and the recommendations of the Government Industry Working Party on compensation have been fully evaluated.

### National Forest

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if there is a wider application for the introduction of a tendering process for farmers who wish to plant woodlands, as currently exists in the national forest. [8537]

**Mr. Morley:** The tendering approach used in the National Forest Tender Scheme has already been applied to other challenges run under the Woodland Grant Scheme including the South West Forest, new native woodlands in national parks, and reversing the fragmentation of ancient woodland.

The Forestry Commission and DEFRA are currently conducting a review of woodland creation grants and will consider as part of this whether the tendering and challenge approach should be used more widely.

### Waterways

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will introduce a waterways agency in her review of waterways management to improve accountability. [8211]

**Mr. Meacher:** The review under way covers the navigation responsibilities of the Environment Agency. The Agency, British Waterways and the Broads Authority manage nearly three-quarters of the navigable inland waterways and are already publicly accountable bodies. There are no plans to review the status of the remaining navigation authorities.

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress she has made in reviewing the structure of the management of waterways; and when she plans to report on the review. [8210]

**Mr. Meacher:** Following the publication of the report of Stage 1 of the Environment Agency Financial Management and Policy Review, I have met the Chairmen of the Agency and British Waterways to discuss the future of the Agency's navigation responsibilities. A decision will be announced shortly.

### Waste Incineration

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the likely effects of the waste incineration directive on the UK biomass industry, with particular reference to the thermal recycling market. [2537]

**Mr. Meacher:** A series of Regulatory and Environmental Impact Assessment reports on the then proposed Waste Incineration Directive were commissioned from consultants. Copies of the reports (dated 1999 and 2000) are available in the Library of the House and were circulated to the industry associations which were consulted during the seven years of the Directive negotiations. These reports include assessments of the estimated costs of compliance with the Directive relating to the waste biomass combustion industry.

The following figures (including the footnote) are taken from various parts of the October 2000 consultants' report.

*£000/per annum*

| *Plant type* | *Number of plants operating or under construction in the UK* | *Number of plants surveyed by consultant* | *Estimated costs of compliance*[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Poultry litter and straw | 5 IPC Part A | 2 | 50–355 |
| | [2]2000+ others | — | — |
| Coffee grounds | 1 | 1 | 26 |
| Waste-refuse derived fuel | 3 | 2 | 150–1,000 |
| Paper and board | 1 IPC Part A | 1 | 30 |
| | No data on others | — | — |
| Wood | [2]3,350 | 0 | [3]— |

[1] 1998 prices

[2] Estimate

[3] In this sector, companies burning treated wood are expected to respond to the proposed Directive by switching away from combustion and towards disposal e.g. to landfill. Negligible cost impacts are expected.

*Note:*

IPC: Integrated Pollution Control under Part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990

The Directive just applies to the incineration of waste, and Article 2.2(a) excludes from the Directive's scope incinerators or co-incinerators which treat only certain biomass waste, namely:

vegetable waste from agriculture and forestry;

vegetable waste from the food processing industry, if the heat generated is recovered;

fibrous vegetable waste from virgin pulp production and from production of paper from pulp, if it is co-incinerated at the place of production and the heat generated is recovered;

wood waste with the exception of wood waste which may contain halogenated organic compounds or heavy metals as a result of treatment with wood preservatives or coating, and which includes in particular such wood waste originating from construction and demolition waste;

cork waste.

We will be consulting in due course on proposals for the transposition of the Directive.

The EU Directive on the promotion of electricity from renewable energy sources in the internal energy market classifies only the biodegradable element of waste as a renewable source. The Government have recently consulted on the Renewables Obligation and electricity generated from biomass (whether energy crops or waste in origin) will be eligible.

### Litter

**Mr. Gareth R. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many people were prosecuted in each of the last five years for litter offences. [8328]

**Mr. Meacher:** Details of the number of people prosecuted in each of the last five years for which figures are available in England and Wales for litter offences are given in the table. Details for 2000 are not yet available.

*Number of defendants prosecuted at magistrates court and convicted at all courts in England and Wales for litter, 1996–99*

| *Offence* | *Year* | *Prosecutions* | *Convictions* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Environmental | 1996 | 626 | 468 |
| Protection Act 1990 | 1997 | 505 | 352 |
| Section 87 | 1998 | 494 | 377 |
| Depositing litter | 1999 | 501 | 390 |

### Nuclear Power

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what contribution nuclear power has made in helping the United Kingdom meet its targets under the Kyoto Protocols; and what meetings she has had with representatives of the nuclear industry on the matter. [6629]

**Mr. Meacher:** Nuclear output was about one third higher in 2000 than in 1990. Because of this increase, UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2000 were between about 1 per cent. and about 2 per cent. lower than they would have been if nuclear output had not increased. The future contribution of nuclear power will depend on how the industry develops, but we expect nuclear power to make a contribution to meeting the UK's current commitment under the Kyoto Protocol. I met representatives of British Energy to discuss this and other issues on 31 January.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Parental Leave

**Mr. Borrow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the outcome of the consultation on the changes to parental leave. [9360]

**Alan Johnson:** We received 46 responses to the consultation, all of which supported our proposals to extend the entitlement to parental leave. I am today publishing the Government's response to the consultation and will place copies in the Libraries of the House and on the Department's website and lay the amending regulations before the House.

### Employment Tribunals

**Mr. Borrow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what performance targets she has set for the Employment Tribunals Service for 2001–02. [9361]

**Alan Johnson:** I have set the Employment Tribunals Service the following performance targets for 2001–02:

| | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| | *Target* |
| *Quality* | |
| Percentage of single Employment Tribunal cases to a first hearing within 26 weeks of receipt | 75 |
| Minimum to be achieved by all offices in relation to above target | 65 |
| Percentage of Employment Tribunal decisions issued within four weeks of the final hearing | 85 |
| Percentage of Employment Tribunal users satisfied with the service offered by ETS | 85 |
| Percentage of appeals to the Employment Appeal Tribunal registered for a preliminary hearing ready for listing within six weeks | 90 |
| *Efficiency* | |
| Real terms reduction in Employment Tribunal administrative costs | 5 |

The first two figures represent a slight reduction (10 per cent.) on last year's targets. I have made this reduction in recognition of the Service's resources and the anticipated demands on the Service to be made this year.

The targets will be published on the ETS website www.ets.gov.uk.

### Supermarkets

**Mr. Borrow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations she has received on the effectiveness of the Code of Practice on the relationships between supermarkets and farms. [4692]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** The Director General of Fair Trading consulted with the major supermarkets and over 100 representatives of suppliers on the drafting of the Code of Practice on supermarkets' relations with their suppliers.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has also received representations from supermarkets and supplier organisations on the draft Code. She is currently considering the Director General's advice on the draft Code.

### Wind Turbines

**Mr. Carmichael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money the Government spent on promoting the generation of electricity using wind power in *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01; and how much it plans to spend in the current financial year. [7327]

**Mr. Wilson:** The table shows spending on wind power through the Non Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO), the Scottish Renewables Order and the DTI's Sustainable Energy Programme.

£ million

| Year | NFFO | Scottish Renewables Order | DTI's Sustainable Energy Programme |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1997–98 | 36.8 | 3.9 | 1.6 |
| 1998–99 | 35.1 | 5.4 | 1.4 |
| 1999–2000 | 7.3 | 6.2 | 1.2 |
| 2000–01 | 6.8 | 5.3 | 1.3 |
| 2001–02 | [1]1.8 | [2]8.9 | [2]2.5 |

[1] Spend to end June 2001
[2] Estimate only

An up-to-date estimate on the current year's financial expenditure on NFFO should be available following a re-profiling exercise which is currently being undertaken by the Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency (NFPA). Spend on wind power will, of course, only be one element of our total spend on renewables. The new Renewables Obligation will create a long-term market for renewables which will be worth over £1 billion per year by 2010. The Obligation will be the main mechanism by which we will meet our renewables targets and will be underpinned by direct Government funding worth over £260 million between 2001 and 2004. This will include an extensive capital grants programme, which will offer at least £49 million for the early deployment of offshore wind.

### Small Business Council

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will publish a response to the Small Business Council's annual report. [8278]

**Nigel Griffiths:** The Government will be responding to the Small Business Council later this year and will make their response public.

### Manufacturing (Rural Areas)

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what help she makes available to manufacturing industry in rural areas. [8581]

**Alan Johnson:** Manufacturing companies in rural areas benefit from the policies we are pursuing to help the manufacturing sectors. The Department's support is wide-ranging: from schemes to encourage technology transfer and collaboration with the science base, to work with specific sectors on targeted programmes to enhance their competitiveness, to providing exporting services and regional and local assistance. In certain circumstances it is also possible for manufacturing companies in rural areas to benefit, along with other sectors, from the Regional Development Agencies' Rural Development Programme.

### Telecommunications

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on her Department's policy on the proposed de-merger of BT with MmO2 and BT wireless. [8582]

**Mr. Alexander:** The corporate structure of BT is a matter for the company and their shareholders and not for the Government. However the DTI and the Radiocommunications Agency remain in close touch with BT on the proposals and any regulatory concerns that may emerge.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the proposed roll-out of broadband into rural areas. [8583]

**Mr. Alexander:** The Government are working to ensure that broadband services are available in all parts of the country. To this end we are developing a strategy together with all interested parties. The £30 million fund for regional Development Agencies and the devolved Administrations is focused on extending broadband networks to those who are not offered access by the market, including in rural areas. The Countryside Agency also included broadband access and demand in its "healthchecks" on 100 market towns, while the devolved Administrations are carrying forward their own work on broadband in rural areas with our support and assistance.

In addition, we are examining the scope for aggregating public sector demand in order to speed up the roll-out of broadband services to individuals and businesses in rural and other areas that service providers currently see as uncommercial.

### Consumer Complaints

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many complaints her Department has received (1) about *(a)* The Mortgage Group, *(b)* i group and *(c)* Ocwen. [6635]

(2) about the company trading as Crazy Georges. [6633]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** Under Exemption 4 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, the Department does not comment on whether or not it has received complaints about individual companies.

This is because to do so could prejudice the outcome of any investigation into a complaint and any legal proceedings which might result from an investigation.

### Gas and Electricity Suppliers

**Ms Oona King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to her answer of 20 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 584W, to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson), on energy, if she will ask the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets to compile a report on the doorstep selling practices of gas and electricity suppliers. [8075]

**Mr. Wilson:** The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM) monitors the performance of gas and electricity suppliers in all areas of marketing and sales, including doorstep selling. Where necessary it will take formal action against individual suppliers. However, in comparison with the high volume of transfers, consumer complaints about direct selling are relatively low. Between January and June 2001, the Gas and Electricity Consumer Council—Energywatch—received an average 0.67 per cent. complaints per 1,000 gas supply transfers and 0.63 per cent. per 1,000 electricity supply transfers. Nonetheless, given the distress that mis-selling can cause, I will shortly write to gas and electricity suppliers setting

out my concerns about the negative impacts that mis-selling can have, both on individual customers and on the competitive market as a whole.

### General Agreement on Trade in Services

**Ann McKechin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans she has to inform Parliament about the Government's future negotiating position on the General Agreement on Trade in Services. [R] [6471]

**Nigel Griffiths:** Parliament approved the objective of sustainable development through progressive liberalisation under the General Agreement on Trade in Services as part of its support for the results of the Uruguay Round. The DTI has been consulting on the current GATS negotiations since 1998. Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the results of negotiations.

### SMART Development (Hull)

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms in the Hull area have received SMART development money over the past five years; and if she will indicate the companies concerned and the amounts involved. [7099]

**Nigel Griffiths:** The following businesses in the Hull Travel-to-Work Area have been offered Smart or SPUR awards since 1 April 1996:

| *Financial year/name of business* | *Type of award* | *Value of grant offer (£)* |
|---|---|---|
| *1996–97* | | |
| Ion Coat Ltd. | SMART[1] | 45,000 |
| Newlands Technology Ltd. | SMART | 45,000 |
| Nucleus | SMART | 45,000 |
| Electronic Automation Ltd. | SPUR[2] | 123,985 |
| Colt Industrial Services Ltd. | SPUR | 22,500 |
| *1997–98* | | |
| Applied Analysis Ltd. | Smart | 43,890 |
| Flexible Fabric Consulting | Smart | 45,000 |
| Smart Solutions | Smart | 37,145 |
| KTP Ltd. | SPUR[3] | 74,900 |
| *1998–99* | | |
| Colt Industrial Services Ltd. | Smart | 96,177 |
| Commercial Systems Ltd. | Smart | 45,000 |
| Ebortec Ltd. | Smart | 44,880 |
| Eurosere UK Ltd. | Smart | 45,000 |
| Ion Coat Ltd. | Smart | 88,390 |
| Scope Engineering Ltd. | Smart | 21,565 |
| Essential Nutrition Ltd. | SPUR[3] | 89,250 |
| *1999–2000* | | |
| Broady Valves Ltd. | Smart | 36,360 |
| Newlands Technology Ltd | Smart | 44,353 |
| Partoria Engineering Ltd. | Smart | 35,908 |
| Precision Drilling 2000 Ltd. | Smart | 45,000 |
| *2000–01* | | |
| Condor Projects Ltd. | Smart | 18,750 |
| Z-Cars Ltd. | Smart Micro[4] | 10,000 |
| *2001–02* | | |
| Clearview Ltd. | Smart | 35,678 |

[1] SMART was merged with SPUR on 1 April 1997 to form a new Smart scheme, to provide grants for feasibility studies and development projects
[2] SPUR provided grants for development projects
[3] Although SPUR was closed on 31 March 1997, a small number of former SMART award winners were still eligible to apply for SPUR awards after that date
[4] Smart Micro Projects were introduced in October 1999. Grants are provided towards the costs of developing simple prototypes

### Assisted Areas

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the areas in receipt of assisted area status may be changed through the Assisted Areas Order 2000 prior to the expiry of that Order in 2006. [6646]

**Alan Johnson:** As I told the hon. Member on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 326W, the Government are not planning to review the assisted areas until it is necessary to develop proposals for the period after 2006.

### RDAs (Tourism)

**Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money *(a)* Yorkshire Forward, *(b)* One North East, *(c)* East of England, *(d)* South West of England, *(e)* South East of England, *(f)* East Midlands, *(g)* Advantage West Midlands and *(h)* North West Development Agency have made available to the tourism industry. [7630]

**Alan Johnson** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The tourism industry benefits substantially from spending all of the Regional Development Agencies' main programmes including SRB and Rural Regeneration. It is also a particular focus of the Business Recovery Fund for foot and mouth disease established by the RDAs largely with extra resources. With an increasing budget, greater flexibility and increased economic focus, the RDAs can continue to build on their support for the tourism industry. Figures for the total spending on the tourism industry are not available because records are maintained on a programme rather than business sector basis.

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Departmental Staff

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will estimate the number of staff employed by her Department by region and nation of the UK; and if she will make a statement. [6822]

**Hilary Benn:** The Department for International Development currently employs 796 permanent staff in London and 483 in Scotland.

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will estimate total annual staff costs for her Department and its agencies by nation and region of the UK; and if she will make a statement. [6823]

**Hilary Benn:** Within the UK, DFID staff are located in London and Scotland only. In 2001–02, we estimate we will spend approximately £28 million on the pay and related costs of staff based in London; and approximately £10 million on the equivalent costs of staff in Scotland.

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many and what proportion of each Civil Service grade in her Department is located in each region and nation of the UK; what the average salary is for each grade; and if she will make a statement. [6826]

**Hilary Benn:** The Department for International Development currently employs 796 staff in London and 483 staff in Scotland. The table gives the detailed information requested.

| *Grade equivalent* | *Number*[1] | *Proportion of those in grade* | *Average salary*[2] *(£)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *London* | | | |
| SCS | 54 | 91.5 | 64,187 |
| G6 | 128 | 96.97 | 47,443 |
| G7 | 188 | 90.38 | 37,617 |
| SEO | 60 | 60.6 | 28,492 |
| HEO | 143 | 70.1 | 24,238 |
| HEO(D) | 52 | 94.55 | 23,773 |
| EO | 144 | 51.99 | 18,747 |
| AO | 153 | 47.52 | 15,489 |
| AA | 54 | 52.43 | 12,763 |
| *Scotland* | | | |
| SCS | 5 | 8.5 | 62,589 |
| G6 | 4 | 3.03 | 44,430 |
| G7 | 20 | 9.62 | 33,952 |
| SEO | 39 | 39.4 | 25,985 |
| HEO | 61 | 29.9 | 21,577 |
| HEO(D) | 3 | 5.45 | 20,434 |
| EO | 133 | 48.01 | 16,893 |
| AO | 169 | 52.48 | 13,083 |
| AA | 49 | 47.57 | 9,986 |

[1] The figures include 180 of our overseas staff who are normally UK-based and are paid London salaries which cannot be disaggregated in our calculations

[2] These figures are for August 2000 salaries. The pay award for August 2001 has yet to be finalised

## London Weighting

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will estimate the total value of London weightings and London living allowances for her Department; and if she will make a statement. [6824]

**Hilary Benn:** On 1 April 1996, following annual pay negotiations with Trade Union representatives and a ballot of staff, London Weighting was fully consolidated into pay for all permanent staff below the Senior Civil Service. For the Senior Civil Service, with the agreement of all those involved, London Weighting was fully consolidated into pay on 1 January 1999.

It is not however possible to estimate the total value of this in current salaries. Individual salaries are based on a number of factors, including performance year on year. Therefore, although the average salary is higher in London at all grades, the difference cannot be fully attributed to the element previously paid separately as London Weighting Allowance.

## Departmental Properties

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will estimate the total running costs for buildings used, owned or rented by her Department for each nation and region of the UK, and estimate the average cost per square metre for properties used by her Department as a whole, and by region and nation of the UK. [6825]

**Hilary Benn:** The estimated total annual costs of our accommodation in our two UK locations, central London and East Kilbride, are as set out in the table. These costs include rent (applicable in the case of central London but not East Kilbride), rates, utilities, service charges, maintenance and minor works, cleaning and security.

£

| *Location* | *Total running costs* | *Cost per sq m* |
|---|---|---|
| Central London | 7,500,000 | 504 |
| East Kilbride | 840,000 | 81 |
| Overall | 8,340,000 | 330 |

## Departmental Spending

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the total amount of spending by her Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of her Department's total spending this constitutes; and if she will make a statement. [6827]

**Hilary Benn:** The vast majority of DFID's expenditure is targeted at or in aid recipient countries, with very limited expenditure occurring in the UK, which we are unable to identify separately let alone split between regions and nations. However, the total cost of administering the UK's development assistance programme from DFID's HQs in London and Scotland was estimated at £80 million in 2000–01, the latest year for which such figures are available. This figure comprises salary costs and associated overheads and represents almost 3 per cent. of the Department's total spending in 2000–01. We estimate that this is split in a ratio of 3:1 between London and Scotland ie at 2 per cent. and 0.7 per cent. respectively.

## Special Advisers and Press Officers

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many *(a)* special advisers and *(b)* press officers were employed (i) full-time, (ii) part-time and (iii) on a contract basis by her Department in each year since 1992. [6929]

**Hilary Benn:** At any one time since 1997, two special advisers have been employed full-time. None were employed before that date, or on a part-time or contract basis since then.

Four full-time press officers have been employed since 1996. We do not have records which enable us to provide accurate information before that time.

### Ministerial Travel

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by ministers in her Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if she will make a statement; [6932]

(2) if she will list all official overseas visits undertaken by ministers in her Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if she will make a statement. [6931]

**Hilary Benn:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Prime Minister on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 823W.

### Correspondence

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what was, for each year since 1995, the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords; [7031]

(2) if she will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by her Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if she will make a statement. [7032]

**Hilary Benn:** The effective handling of correspondence and PQs is an issue to which we attach great importance.

General information on the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall and on overall performance is published by the Cabinet Office. Figures for 2000 were published on 6 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 324–28W, and on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W.

We aim to answer all ordinary written parliamentary questions for the House of Commons within five working days, and named day written parliamentary questions on the day named. The office aims to answer written parliamentary questions for the House of Lords within 10 working days.

The Department for International Development has answered a total of 215 parliamentary questions in both Houses so far this Session.

### Afghanistan

**Mr. Woodward:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what money the European Union intends to make available for Afghan refugees who are *(a)* outside and *(b)* within Afghanistan; and when the funding will be made available. [7678]

**Clare Short:** The EC has disbursed €45 million (UK share £8.5 million) of humanitarian and food aid during 2001 to Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons, most of this before 11 September. A further €8 million (UK share £1.5 million) of food aid has been pledged to the World Food Programme but not yet delivered. A further €25 million (UK share £4.7 million) has been pledged by the Commission and should be disbursed later this month. Most of this is channelled through UN agencies and the ICRC, the rest through NGOs.

€22.5 million (UK share £4.4 million) of separate funds will shortly be available for longer term support for refugees in the region, which the Commission aims to disburse in January 2002. This will also be channelled through UN agencies and NGOs.

The Commission is reviewing its plans for 2002. My Department will stay in close touch with them as part of our effort to ensure that the international response to the crisis is Afghanistan is as closely co-ordinated and effective as possible.

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate she has made of the amount of aid required to prevent starvation in Afghanistan; how much aid has been sent into that country; and if she will make a statement. [8198]

**Hilary Benn:** The World Food Programme (WFP) is responsible for overseeing food aid assistance on behalf of the international community. It estimates that some 52,000 metric tonnes of food are required each month for the 7.5 million most vulnerable Afghans. Since 11 September, WFP has made some progress, having distributed around 15,000 metric tonnes of food inside Afghanistan. However more needs to be done to provide for the Afghan people and lay down stores for the winter.

As I announced last week, we are setting aside £40 million for immediate assistance to the people of Afghanistan. As part of our strategy, we continue to support the WFP and its implementing partners in trying to overcome a number of operational constraints on delivering assistance to Afghans in need. This includes £3 million for the WFP to support its operations in the region.

## SOLICITOR-GENERAL

### Afghanistan

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Solicitor-General if she has provided advice on the legality of each target in Afghanistan which has been bombed since 7 October. [8208]

**The Solicitor-General:** As chief legal advisers to Her Majesty's Government, the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General are available to advise the Government on all questions of international and domestic law. In this capacity the Law Officers have been asked to advise, from

time to time, on legal issues relating to the use of force. This has included the right of self-defence as recognised in Article 51 of the UN Charter and international humanitarian law. There is a long-standing convention that neither the substance of the Law Officers' advice, nor the fact that they have been consulted, is disclosed outside Government.

The Campaign Objectives on defeating international terrorism, placed in the Library of the House of Commons, make clear the Government's commitment to acting in conformity with international law, including the UK Charter and international humanitarian law.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

**Mrs. Roe:** To ask the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps the Commission is taking in respect of the expiration of the current term of appointment of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards in February 2002. [9039]

**Mr. Kirkwood:** The appointment of the current Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Mrs. Elizabeth Filkin, ends in February 2002. The House of Commons Commission has considered how best to fill the post for the future. It has decided that there should be an open competition through advertisement in the national press as part of the overall selection process. As a result of the sifting and initial interview process, a shortlist will be drawn up for final interview. The Commission hopes to be able to make a recommendation to the House early in 2002. The competition will be organised to meet the appropriate standards for senior appointments, including equality of opportunity and selection on merit.

The competition will be open to existing members of staff, including Mrs. Filkin, as well as to external applicants. In the event of Mrs. Filkin wishing to enter the selection process, she would take part in the final short list stage when candidates were interviewed by the Commission.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### English Heritage

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she expects a new Chief Executive to be appointed to English Heritage. [6062]

**Dr. Howells:** English Heritage advertised for a new chief executive on 9 September and are considering the applications they received. They plan to hold interviews in mid-November and hope to make an appointment at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime, Carole Souter has been appointed as Acting Chief Executive.

### WPC Kaur

**Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what briefings she has received on the progress of the Croydon Employment Tribunal case involving her, the Royal Parks Constabulary and WPC Kaur; [7407]

(2) if she will estimate the cost to her Department's budget of preparing for and the hearing of the employment discrimination case of WPC Kaur; [7408]

(3) if she will make a statement on *(a)* the claim and *(b)* the response in her name to the discrimination case of WPC Kaur; [7406]

(4) if she will discuss the discrimination claim of WPC Kaur with *(a)* the operational head of the Royal Parks Constabulary and *(b)* the Police Inspectorate. [7409]

**Dr. Howells:** Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its Chief Executive, William Weston. I have asked him to reply.

*Letter from William Weston to Peter Bottomley, dated 18 October 2001:*

I have been asked by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to reply to your Parliamentary Questions about the Employment Tribunal involving WPC Kaur, because this is an operational matter for which the Royal Parks Agency is responsible.

We have fully briefed the Secretary of State on the case, and the decision to defend it. There is no need to keep her informed of the case as it progresses, but we shall, of course, inform her of the outcome and of any issues that arise from it. She will make a statement on the case, if it is appropriate for her to do so, depending on its outcome. It would be inappropriate for her to discuss the case with the Police Inspectorate because the Royal Parks Constabulary is not a Home Office Police Force.

The Agency's legal fees up to the time that the hearing began were approximately £53,500, to which will have to be added counsel's fees for presenting the case and the costs of the RPC officers involved (and of former officers who now work for the British Transport Police) attending throughout the hearing. These can not be reasonably estimated until we know how long the hearing will last, and the full costs of the case cannot be assessed until the outcome is known.

### Football

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) how much has been invested by the Government in the promotion of grassroots football in the years *(a)* 1997–98, *(b)* 1998–99, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01; [7838]

(2) if she will make a statement on the Government's support for the promotion of grassroots football. [7837]

**Mr. Caborn:** Support for grassroots sport is a Government priority. As the nation's most popular participatory sport, football has a vital role to play in increasing levels of participation. The Government's support for grassroots football has been channelled through the Football Foundation since July 2000. In 2000–01, the Foundation received £7 million in Lottery funding from Sport England and £3.4 million from the Reduction in Pools Betting Duty, and the majority of this went to funding the sport at the grassroots. A further £30 million has been ring-fenced for football in the New Opportunities Fund's PE and school sport programme.

Prior to 2000–01, grants of Lottery funding to the Football Association's youth development programmes were made by Sport England, and totalled £20 million between 1995 and 1999. Children's and recreational

football also benefited during this period from substantial Sport England Lottery funding for multi-use capital projects, and the financial benefits to grassroots football cannot be quantified.

Additional, direct Government funding for the FA's grassroots work totalled £165,000 in 1998–99 and £144,000 in 1999–2000.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions she has had with representatives of the Nationwide Conference League on its proposal to increase the number of teams promoted into the football league. [8549]

**Mr. Caborn:** This is a matter for the football authorities. However, I met the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Nationwide Conference on 16 July to discuss a range of non-league football matters including the proposal for an additional promotion and relegation place to and from the football league. My officials have also discussed the progress of negotiations with the Conference over recent months.

### Films

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on Government support for the distribution of UK-produced films. [8053]

**Dr. Howells:** As part of its objective to help develop a sustainable British film industry, the Film Council is looking at the question of support for the UK film distribution sector. The Film Council currently invests in individual film productions which can, on a case-by-case basis, include support for the distribution of that film in the UK.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) how many British-made films have benefited from EU funds in the last five years; and if she will make a statement; [8055]

(2) if she will list the films produced in the UK in the last five years which have received EU funds, stating the sum involved in each case. [8057]

**Dr. Howells:** EU funding for film over the last five years was discharged through the MEDIA II programme. The MEDIA programme is intended to encourage the development of European films and the distribution of films around Europe. The total funding awarded by MEDIA II to UK films in the last five years was approximately 14 million euros (approximately £8.8 million at today's rates) for film development and approximately 38 million euros (approximately £23.9 million at today's rates) for theatrical film distribution. The distribution figure was the sum awarded outside the UK for distribution of British films in Europe.

I am placing more detailed information on the MEDIA II Programme and the awards made in the Libraries of both Houses.

### Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will estimate total annual staff costs for her Department and its agencies by nation and region of the UK; and if she will make a statement. [6775]

**Dr. Howells:** My Department's estimated total costs are £20.97 million—London: £20.58 million, Regions: £0.39 million.

### Youth Hostel Association

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent representations she has received on the financial loss being experienced by the Youth Hostel Association; if she will introduce grant aid; and if she will make a statement. [8129]

**Dr. Howells:** We have received a number of representations on the Youth Hostel Association's financial losses. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Rural Affairs has met representatives of the YHA to discuss their difficulties and possible sources of help. I am also due to meet them shortly. The Minister for Rural Affairs is currently considering, in the light of the recommendations of the Rural Task Force published yesterday, what further help might be made available to the YHA.

### Rugby

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the 2001 Super League Grand Final. [8434]

**Mr. Caborn:** I was at Old Trafford for the Grand Final and enjoyed watching a tremendous game with the Bradford Bulls playing superb rugby.

I was pleased to be part of the presentation party presenting the winners trophy to Bradford Bulls Team Captain Robby Paul and reiterate my congratulations to the whole team.

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assistance she has provided to the Rugby Football League to persuade the Australian Rugby League authorities to continue with the tour of Great Britain. [8431]

**Mr. Caborn:** My right hon. Friend has had no direct involvement with the Rugby Football League on this matter. However, I have been in regular contact with the RFL.

### Tourism

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what funding she makes available to local authorities to establish tourism officers. [8439]

**Dr. Howells:** Funding is allowed for tourism as part of the Environmental Protective and Cultural Services block of the Rate Support Grant and it is up to individual local authorities to allocate their funds in accordance with statutory requirements and local needs and priorities. We are keen that local authorities both recognise the true significance of tourism to their local economies and community well-being and also ensure that they have Ifpsufficient data to make informed decisions about allocating their resources, whether in relation to provision of tourism infrastructure, services, personnel or marketing.

**Mrs. Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to promote rural tourism. [4688]

**Dr. Howells:** At the regional, national and international level, new tourist websites and visitor hotlines have provided exposure and a clear picture of what rural Britain can offer. Leaflet information has also been used successfully. Much of the £18 million in additional funding provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to the British Tourist Authority (BTA) and English Tourism Council (ETC) has been used in a strategic advertising and marketing campaigns to motivate potential customers and provide information on what is available. Furthermore, DCMS Ministers attended a number of high profile domestic events to increase rural tourism's exposure and encourage visitors.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she intends to make tourist boards co-terminous with regional areas. [8548]

**Dr. Howells:** It is not within Government's powers to direct the Regional Tourist Boards (RTBs) on this issue as they are not public bodies—almost all are private companies limited by guarantee. While they do receive some public funding from this Department (via the English Tourism Council), they are funded primarily by their members and from their commercial activities. Thus they need valid commercial reasons to choose to change their boundaries to be in line with other regional partners. In principle we would like to see all RTBs having the same boundaries as the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and closer alignment is happening in many regions, although in some cases two RTBs share one RDA area or vice versa.

**John Thurso:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to her answer of 17 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 151W, on tourism, which representatives of the *(a)* Scotland Office, *(b)* Scottish Executive and *(c)* Scottish Tourist Board attended the United Kingdom summit on tourism on 6 March. [R] [7100]

**Dr. Howells:** Alasdair Morrison MSP, Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning and Gaelic in the Scottish Executive, who attended in March 2000, was invited to the second annual Tourism Summit 6 March 2001, but was unable to attend due to prior commitments on that date. A draft report of the Summit was circulated to Ministers for clearance, including Alasdair Morrison, prior to its publication on the DCMS website (www.culture.gov.uk).

### Museums

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what help her Department makes available to small municipal museums. [8550]

**Dr. Howells:** My Department provides annual funding to Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, which acts as a strategic champion for the museums sector. Resource in turn funds Area Museum Councils in each of the English regions to provide advice and assistance to museums of all types.

In December 2000 my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) announced the creation of a Task Force to report to Government on the nature of the problems facing regional museums and how these problems can be solved. I expect that the Task Force will publish its report shortly. The Department will consider its policies and priorities for regional museums, in consultation with Resource, in the light of that report.

### Sport England

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what proposals she has to strengthen the regional structures of Sport England. [8551]

**Mr. Caborn:** In terms of delivering and supporting sport development through revenue programmes, guidance and advice, Sport England regional offices are well placed to take a strategic lead locally. DCMS is currently engaged in the second stage of a quinquennial review of Sport England, which includes a specific element relating to Sport England's regional role and structure. I expect the review to be completed early in the New Year, at which point I will discuss its findings with the new chief executive of Sport England, who is currently being recruited, and with Sport England's Council members, with a view to implementing the recommendations on Sport England's regional presence as promptly as possible.

### Walkers

**Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what the impact has been of the foot and mouth outbreak on walking holidays in this year's tourist season. [4702]

**Dr. Howells:** No specific figures on the impact of the foot and mouth outbreak on walking holidays are available. Our best estimate to date is that the loss of revenue in 2001–02 by the English tourist industry is likely to be about £3.3 billion in "value added" terms over the eight month period under consideration (March to October). We will continue to revise the model on which this estimate is based in the light of the latest available data.

## EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### Music Lessons

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what estimate she has made of the number of pupils in state maintained schools who were given lessons in playing a musical instrument without parental contribution to the cost in the last 12 months; and what percentage this represents of the total number of children receiving such tuition in maintained schools. [7485]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Department does not collect this information centrally. It is up to each LEA to devise its own policy on whether to charge for instrumental music tuition provided outside of the National Curriculum.

We are committed, however, to supporting instrumental music tuition. The Music Standards Fund was introduced to halt the decline in LEA music services. Between 1999 and 2004, £270 million has been made available to protect and expand local music services. We have also pledged that, over time, all primary school pupils who want to will be able to learn a musical instrument. This is an important part of our drive to ensure that all pupils, regardless of their background, have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

### Engineering GCSE

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if a new vocational GCSE in engineering will be offered from 2003. [7803]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The new GCSE in engineering will be introduced from September 2002.

### Playing Fields

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools have sold off playing fields each year since 1991. [8578]

**Mr. Timms:** Before October 1998 there was nothing to prevent a local authority selling a school playing field if it wanted to. Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 was introduced in October 1998 to stop the indiscriminate sale of school playing fields. Local authorities and governing bodies of all maintained schools are now required to obtain the Secretary of State's consent before disposing of playing fields or any part of a playing field.

Since October 1998, 101 applications to sell areas equal to, or larger than, a sports pitch have been approved. These approved applications can be broken down for each year since the law was changed as follows:

| *Year* | *Approved applications* |
|---|---|
| 1998 | 7 |
| 1999 | 44 |
| 2000 | 31 |
| 2001 | 19 |

Applications to sell school playing fields are approved only where it is clear that any proceeds will be used to improve or enhance school sports provision or education facilities. All applications made since mid-July this year are scrutinised by the independent School Playing Fields Advisory Panel to make sure that they conform to published criteria. The Panel comprises representatives from the National Playing Fields Association, the Central Council of Physical Recreation, the education organisation Learning through Landscapes, the National Association of Head Teachers and the Local Government Association.

40 per cent. of approved applications were in respect of sports pitches at closed or closing schools. In 67 per cent. of cases at operating schools, the sale proceeds have been used to provide new or enhanced sports facilities, including sports halls, all-weather pitches or improved grass pitches.

### Student Maintenance

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on the future of student tuition fees and loans. [8421]

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on the Government's proposals for student maintenance in higher education. [8579]

**Margaret Hodge:** We are currently reviewing the student funding arrangements. We need to ensure that we have an appropriate balance between the contribution made by students, their families and the state to support our ambitions to widen access to and participation in higher education. A range of policy options is being considered. No decisions have been taken.

### Further Education

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make a statement on funding arrangements for staff in FE, with special reference to pay and enhanced training. [8580]

**Margaret Hodge:** The total funding allocated for further education this year is just over £4 billion, rising to £4.3 billion in 2002–03. Colleges make their own arrangements for staff pay and conditions within the funding available to them from the Learning and Skills Council and other sources.

We are investing £300 million in the Teaching Pay Initiative (TPI) over the next three years to allow colleges to reward high-quality teaching. An additional £5 million is available for TPI in 2002–03 to support modernising pay arrangements. Payments under TPI are separate from any general pay rise a teacher may receive.

£80 million is available to colleges (including sixth form colleges) this year from the Standards Fund, and £90 million next year, to support the professional development of existing staff and for the initial training of unqualified new entrants to the profession.

**Mr. Alan Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what *(a)* number and *(b)* proportion of further education colleges employ lecturing staff on banded pay scales that prevent progress to the top of the main grade lecturer scale. [6669]

**John Healey:** The Department does not collect this information.

FE sector colleges are run by independent corporations established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and there is no national pay structure in place. Colleges are free to establish banded pay scales where these meet their needs and can be agreed with their staff. We continue to encourage employers and unions to work together to offer further education staff reasonable pay within the substantial extra funding that has been made available for the FE sector.

### Special Educational Needs

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills when she will bring forward a revised draft code of practice for special educational needs; and if she will make a statement. [6754]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* A revised draft Code of Practice will be laid before the House as soon as possible. It will contain revised wording on the quantification of provision in statements of special educational needs and, subject to parliamentary approval, is planned to take effect from January 2002.

### Specialist Schools

**Mr. Willis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will list each school that has been granted specialist college status in the years *(a)* 1999–2000 and *(b)* 2000–01 and list for each the sources of sponsorship to meet the sponsorship criteria. [7688]

**Mr. Timms:** Detailed information on the sources of sponsorship can be provided only at disproportionate cost. Sources of sponsorship may be categorised as follows:

(a) large national organisations (companies and company or other charitable foundations) usually donating through the Technology Colleges Trust;

(b) local businesses from large to very small, usually donating direct to the school;

(c) school foundation funds;

(d) donations from individuals;

(e) parent teacher association fundraising;

(f) public-private partnership arrangements;

(g) profits from formally constituted school trading companies.

### School Closures

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools in rural areas have been closed each year since 1991. [8577]

**Mr. Timms:** The Department does not have reliable data on a year-by-year basis on the number of rural schools closed between 1991 and 1997. We estimate that in the period 1983 to the beginning of 1998 around 450 rural primary schools closed. Since we introduced our current policy, with a presumption against the closure of rural schools, in February 1998, the number of rural schools approved for closure has been as follows.

1997: 4

1998: 5

1999: 2

2000: 2

2001: 3.

### Education Costs (Recovery)

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what powers exist to recover the cost of education provided at public expense to those ineligible to receive such education; [7952]

(2) how much was recovered, in the last year for which information is available, of the cost of education provided at public expense to those ineligible to receive such education; and how much is estimated to remain uncollected. [7953]

**Mr. Timms** *[holding answer 16 October 2001]:* All school children living in Britain are eligible to receive education free of charge provided by local education authorities. This Government have already extended free nursery education for four-year-olds and will do so for every three-year-old, whose parents want it, by 2004. For higher education, the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2001 determine the eligibility of students to receive financial support and the circumstances in which such costs can be recovered from ineligible students. Information on costs recovered from higher education students who are found to be ineligible are unobtainable, as these repayments are not differentiated from other forms of repayments from eligible students.

### Nursery Places

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many children aged three years obtained nursery places in the years *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999, *(d)* 2000 and *(e)* 2001. [7717]

**Mr. Timms:** The following table shows the number of three-year-olds in early education places in England from 1997 to 2001 based on the position at January each year.

It is the Government's stated intention that every three-year-old in England, whose parents want one, will have a free nursery education place by September 2004.

Final figures information for 2001 will be published in the Statistical Bulletin "Provision for Children Under Five years of age in January 2001" at the end of November.

*Number of three-year-olds[1,2,3] by type of early years education provider in England 1997–2001—position as at January each year*

| | *1997* | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* | *[4]2001* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Private, voluntary and independent providers*[5] | | | | | |
| Number of three-year-olds | [6]— | [6]— | [6]— | 294,700 | 312,300 |
| *of which:* | | | | | |
| Number of funded places[7] | [6]— | [6]— | [6]— | 39,500 | 123,000 |
| *Maintained schools*[8] | | | | | |
| Number of three-year olds | 217,000 | 224,600 | 228,200 | 232,200 | 229,100 |

[1] Headcount of children aged three at 31 December in the previous calendar year

[2] Rounded to the nearest hundred

[3] Any child attending more than one provider may have been counted twice

[4] Provisional

[5] Includes Independent schools

[6] Information was not collected for Providers other than Independent schools

[7] Children aged three with providers who claim Nursery Education Grant. Figures include independent schools

[8] Includes maintained nursery, primary and special schools. Places are all funded

### Temporary Classrooms (Upminster)

**Angela Watkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many temporary classrooms have been in use in Upminster in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement. [6628]

**Mr. Timms:** We do not have information on Upminster's temporary buildings at this localised level of detail. Essex local education authority may be able to provide this information.

In connection with the Department's arrangements for appraising asset management plans, we are planning to publish later this year analyses of authorities' premises information for benchmarking purposes. These should include information on temporary accommodation in Essex local education authority, although not on a year-by-year basis.

## SCOTLAND

### Prestwick Air Traffic Control Centre

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment she has made of the economic impact of the postponement of the construction of the Prestwick air traffic control centre *(a)* locally and *(b)* on Scotland. [7422]

**Mrs. Liddell:** The Scotland Office is closely monitoring the situation regarding the new centre. As the decision by NATS to review the phasing of the Scottish centre was taken only recently, detailed impacts, if any, of the decision are not yet known.

All parties involved in this project remain committed to investing in the new Scottish centre at Prestwick. This project will deliver significant benefits both for Ayrshire and Scotland as a whole through construction work and highly skilled operational staff.

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what meetings she *(a)* has had and *(b)* has planned to discuss the postponement of the construction of the Prestwick air traffic control centre. [7419]

**Mrs. Liddell:** The Scotland Office is in regular contact with the relevant parties in relation to the Prestwick air traffic control centre. The events of 11 September have had an effect on air movements, which has given rise to a review of the phasing of NATS capital investment plan. As a result, the new centre will have a later operational date than originally planned. All parties involved remain committed to investment in the new Scottish centre at Prestwick and to complete this important project.

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations she has received from National Air Traffic Control about the postponement of the construction of the Prestwick air traffic control centre. [7420]

**Mrs. Liddell:** I receive representations on a wide variety of issues concerning reserved matters in Scotland. The Scotland Office, both at ministerial and official level, is in close contact with all the relevant parties concerning the future of the new Scottish centre at Prestwick.

### Boundary Commission

**Mr. Peter Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will make a statement on the timetable for *(a)* publication and *(b)* implementation of Boundary Commission proposals for Scotland. [6498]

**Mrs. Liddell** *[holding answer 16 October 2001]:* The Boundary Commission for Scotland is required, by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, to submit its report to me between December 2002 and December 2006.

As soon as may be after the Commission has submitted its report, I am required under section 3(5) of the 1986 Act to lay the report before Parliament, together with the draft of an Order in Council for giving effect, with or without modifications, to the recommendations in the report.

## TREASURY

### Working Families Tax Credit

**Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the major promotional activity that has occurred to publicise the working families tax credit since it was introduced; and what future plans the Government have to publicise the benefit. [7900]

**Dawn Primarolo:** There have been three major campaigns to publicise the WFTC between September 1999 and November 2000.

Posters and leaflets in Job Centres and other outlets have supported TV and press advertisements, and Ministers led a series of roadshows throughout the UK.

A freephone line (now replaced by 0845 number) has backed up all advertising

We will continue to advertise existing tax credits until the new ones are in place. WFTC reminder press and radio will run in October/November.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

**Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Governments of *(a)* South Africa, *(b)* Mozambique, *(c)* Malawi, *(d)* Botswana, *(e)* Angola and *(f)* Nigeria regarding the status of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting originally scheduled for 6–9 October. [7833]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has not discussed the status of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, originally scheduled for 6–9 October, with the Governments of South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi, Botswana, Angola and Nigeria. This is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Secretary General.

### Zimbabwe

**Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he

has to discuss the situation in Zimbabwe with the Governments of *(a)* South Africa, *(b)* Mozambique, *(c)* Malawi, *(d)* Botswana, *(e)* Angola and *(f)* Nigeria; and if he will make a statement. [7831]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We remain concerned about the situation in Zimbabwe. We are in close contact with other Commonwealth and SADC partners, particularly concerning the commitments made by Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth at a meeting in Abuja on 6 September. Since the visit to Harare by five SADC Heads of State on 10–11 September, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to the President of Malawi on 9 October. My noble Friend Baroness Amos has spoken to the President of Nigeria on 17 and 18 September and the Foreign Minister of Mozambique on 19 September. My noble Friend also attended the EU/Africa meeting in Brussels on 11 October and took the opportunity to speak to other representatives of African Governments.

### Middle East

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he plans to take to help bring about a lasting ceasefire between the Israeli and Palestinian forces; and if it is his policy to support the establishment of a free Palestinian State. [7865]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The primary responsibility to bring the violence to a halt rests with both parties concerned. We are actively engaged with them to ensure that the ceasefire commitments they have made are turned into reality on the ground. We are urging them to build on the dialogue re-established by Chairman Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Peres, and to implement swiftly and in full the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee.

The British Government support the right of the Palestinian people to establish a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state and look forward to early fulfilment of this right, provided there is a concomitant recognition of Israel's right as a state, and the right of its citizens to live in peace with security. Peace between Israel and the Palestinians will only come through a political process which implements 'land for peace', delivers security for Israel within recognised borders, brings an end to occupation, and allows the emergence of a viable, democratic and peaceful Palestinian state committed to co-existence with Israel, and recognised and respected by Israel. Such an outcome would be a major contribution to regional stability.

### Departmental Staff

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the number of staff employed by his Department by region and nation of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6816]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 1009–12W.

### Devolved Administrations

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is with regard to *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in his Department giving evidence to (i) Scottish Parliament, (ii) Welsh Assembly and (iii) Northern Ireland Assembly Committees; and to what categories of document he gives (A) full access, (B) restricted access and (C) no access to (1) Scottish parliament, (2) Welsh Assembly, (3) Northern Ireland Assembly and (4) House of Commons Select committees. [7036]

**Mr. Straw:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister of State, Cabinet Office to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 1003–05W.

### Entry Clearance Applications

**Ms Oona King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for entry clearance as *(a)* spouse and *(b)* fiancée were received at British posts around the world in each of the last five years; and how many of those applications were refused because the entry clearance officer was not satisfied that the couple intended to live together permanently. [8078]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** Records do not distinguish between those applications submitted by spouses or fiance(e)s and other settlement categories. Nor are refusal reasons collated. To ask all the 165 Entry Clearance Posts to provide this information now would require them to carry out a manual search of their records. This could be done only at disproportionate cost.

### Human Rights Report

**Mr. Tony Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report on human rights will be published. [9246]

**Peter Hain:** The FCO annual report on human rights was laid before Parliament as a Command Paper on Monday 17 September 2001. Copies were placed in the Libraries of the House and distributed throughout Parliament in the usual way. The report is on the FCO website www.hrpd.fco.gov.uk and is available through the Stationery Office.

### Kosovo

**Mr. Colman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about recent export licences for military listed equipment to Kosovo. [9247]

**Mr. MacShane:** The Government have recently issued licences for the export of the following military listed goods:

Bulletproof vests for use by the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) which will provide protection against the threat posed by small arms.

A cab control box for use by the Irish contingent of Kosovo Force (KFOR). It is a logistical piece of equipment that offers remote control operation from within the cab of a military cargo vehicle to load and unload paletted loads such as fuel, ammunition or temporary accommodation, allowing the operator to remain in the cab in potentially dangerous situations.

Protective body armour for use by Ronco Consulting Corporation who are engaged in humanitarian demining activities on behalf of the UN Mine Action Co-ordination Centre in Kosovo.

Protective body armour and components for UNMIK for use by the Kosovo Police Service, which provides protection against the threat posed by small arms.

When the export licences were issued for these goods, the FRY was subject to an EU arms embargo (EU Common Position 96/184/CFSP). The decisions on these exports were part of the Government's continuing support for the peaceful reconstruction of Kosovo and were in the Government's view, within the spirit of the embargo, which was subsequently lifted on 8 October 2001, following the removal of the UN arms embargo on 10 September.

### Christians

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had recently with the *(a)* Church of England, *(b)* Roman Catholic Church and *(c)* Free churches on the suppression of Christian minorities in different parts of the world. [8540]

**Peter Hain:** Promotion of human rights is at the heart of our foreign policy and we regard religious freedom as a fundamental human right. We condemn instances where individuals are persecuted because of their faith, wherever it happens and whatever the religion of the individual or group concerned.

We take every opportunity, often working with our EU partners, to urge states to pursue laws and practices which foster tolerance and mutual respect and to protect religious minorities against discrimination, intimidation and attacks. We regularly raise specific cases of religious persecution with the governments concerned.

This Government greatly value dialogue with civil society and have worked to strengthen it. Ministers and officials regularly discuss human rights concerns in a range of countries with non-governmental groups. For example, officials from our African Department Equatorial met staff from the Offices of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Guildford before their visits to Nigeria; and last year in Sudan we helped with the Anglican Church's Centenary celebrations and with the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The FCO also organises an ad-hoc Contact Group on international religious freedom. The next meeting is due to take place in December. This meeting is attended by a range of organisations, including different Christian denominations.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had recently with *(a)* the Sudan, *(b)* Nigeria, and *(c)* Indonesia on their Governments' treatment of Christians. [8539]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We are concerned about the human rights of all in Sudan, Nigeria and Indonesia, regardless of their ethnic or religious background. The people of Sudan, including its Christian communities, have certainly suffered as a result of Sudan's civil war. We have a regular dialogue with the parties in Sudan to encourage them to work towards a lasting and just peace settlement. Only when there is peace can the human rights of all Sudanese be safeguarded. In addition we make representations to the Government of Sudan about individual cases which cause us concern. We continue to work with the Churches, both in Sudan and the UK, as they have an important role to play in the search for peace.

The Nigerian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion to all citizens. The Federal States maintain that the introduction of the Sharia penal code is a matter for them not the Government. But they also stress that the code does not apply to non-Muslims unless the latter so choose. Our High Commissioner in Abuja has regular contact will all States' Governors.

We raise human rights issues with the Indonesian authorities, both bilaterally and through the European Union, at every opportunity. I did so most recently when I met Vice-President Hamzah Haz and the Attorney-General in Jakarta on 27 August 2001.

### Underwater Cultural Heritage

**Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to support the UNESCO Convention on the protection of the underwater cultural heritage at the 31 session from 15 October to 3 November. [8526]

**Peter Hain:** Her Majesty's Government are still considering the text of the draft UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage which as been submitted by an expert working group to the UNESCO General Conference later this month.

### Overseas Ministers

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his practice to notify hon. Members of visits to their constituencies by Ministers of overseas Governments when those visits are accompanied by Government officials. [8594]

**Mr. MacShane:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is rightly proud of the large number of visits to the UK by overseas Ministers. The degree of Foreign and Commonwealth Office involvement is determined by the nature of the visit and the programme content. Unfortunately, Foreign and Commonwealth Office resource constraints dictate that it is not possible to undertake to notify hon. Members every time an overseas Minister visits their constituency. I am unable to answer for the practice of other Government Departments.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the visits made by Ministers of the New Zealand Government to the United Kingdom since 7 June, listing in each case the constituencies visited. [8593]

**Mr. MacShane:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office continues to offer a warm welcome to the many ministerial visitors from New Zealand who visit the UK in both an official and private capacity. The degree of official Foreign and Commonwealth Office involvement and contact is determined by the nature of the visit and the programme content. Since 7 June we are aware of four visits to the UK by Ministers of the New Zealand

Government: Ms Margaret Wilson, Attorney General and Minister of Labour; Mr. Trevor Mallard, the Minister of Education; Mr. Phil Goff, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and Mr. Michael Cullen, the Minister of Finance. All four visit programmes were not arranged by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and I am unable to confirm all of the constituencies they might have visited.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the visits made by Ministers of overseas Governments to the Isle of Wight since 7 June. [8592]

**Mr. MacShane:** The UK is a popular destination for overseas Ministers. Many visit frequently on official business and in a private capacity. The degree of Foreign and Commonwealth Office involvement is determined by the nature of the visit and the programme content. Since 7 June we are only aware of the visit to the Isle of Wight by Mr. Trevor Mallard, the Minister of Education of New Zealand, which was not organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Incapacity Benefit

**Mr. Webb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will review the new time-limited permitted work rules for people with learning disabilities who combine incapacity benefit with therapeutic work and whose condition is unlikely to improve over time; and if he will make a statement. [7570]

**Malcolm Wicks:** We have listened to concerns expressed by disability organisations during our consultation over the new permitted work rules. We are now proposing that people who work in the community with ongoing support or supervision from a professional caseworker (employed or engaged by a public body or voluntary organisation) will not be subject to the new time limits. This will ensure that people, such as those with learning disabilities, whose condition is unlikely to improve over time will continue to be able to combine some work while receiving their incapacity benefits. Regulations to implement this will be laid at the end of the year.

### Winter Fuel Payments

**Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the number of people entitled to a £100 winter fuel payment in winter 2000 who actually received £200; and how many of these overpayments have been recovered. [7914]

**Mr. McCartney:** The amount paid to individuals depends on their household circumstances. Provisions in regulations allow for the automatic payment of a Winter Fuel Payment based on records held by the Department. If departmental records need updating, or the customer has failed to report a change in circumstances affecting the payment, the Department can accept the return of payments. Reasons are not specified for returned payments received from District Offices.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what changes he is proposing in regulations for Disability Living Allowance in connection with people who are fearful of walking outdoors in unfamiliar places without assistance; what representations he has received on them; and if he will make a statement. [7178]

**Maria Eagle:** Proposed regulations to clarify the conditions of entitlement to the lower rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance in these circumstances are being considered by the Social Security Advisory Committee. The Committee recently consulted publicly and asked for comments on the draft regulations by 14 September. The Committee is considering the responses it has received and I await its report.

A SSAC press release that included a copy of the draft regulations and an explanatory memorandum is available in the Library.

The proposed regulations do not alter the basic qualifying criteria for the lower rate mobility component. People with severe physical and mental disabilities will still be able to qualify on the basis of those disabilities alone.

The intention of the proposed regulations is to ensure that people who experience fear or anxiety when walking out of doors on unfamiliar routes without supervision or guidance are entitled to lower rate mobility component only if their ability to walk independently is directly affected by a severe mental disability. This is to ensure that the scope of the lower rate mobility component remains within the parameters set out when the component was first introduced.

We have, in addition, received representations from a number of hon. Members about the proposed regulations.

### LETS and Time Banks

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on *(a)* local exchange trading schemes and *(b)* time banks, with specific reference to benefit claimants. [8492]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Participation in local exchange trading schemes is treated as employment for those claiming income-related benefits, and any credits received are treated as earnings.

Entitlement to benefits is not affected by participation in time exchange schemes where the credits derived are counted in time and not exchanged for goods or services.

### CSA (Earnings Deductions)

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the impact on employers when deductions of earnings are made at source as a result of the intervention of the Child Support Agency; [8493]

(2) what discussions he has had with *(a)* employers and *(b)* employers' organisations on the operation of the deductions of earnings at source following CSA intervention. [8495]

**Malcolm Wicks:** We are concerned about burdens on business and aim to ensure that regulations are necessary, give effective protection, balance cost and risk, are fair and command public confidence. It is a general principle that both parents, whether they live together or apart, are primarily responsible for supporting their children—not the taxpayer. Deductions from earnings orders (DEOs) are sometimes the only effective method of collecting child maintenance from non-resident parents who otherwise fail to meet their responsibilities. Employers can take an additional £1 from non-resident parents' wages towards their administration costs each time a deduction is made.

The CSA, in partnership with the Inland Revenue, is in close consultation with a group of employers and their representatives (including representatives of payroll professionals) about arrangements flowing from the child support scheme. This has led to changes to DEO procedures. Local CSA managers also liaise with employers and employer organisations in their area about child support issues.

### Universal Bank

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on his involvement on progress towards the operation of the Universal Bank. [8491]

**Mr. Darling:** The Government are committed to sustaining a national network of post offices. One of the initiatives that is being put in place to deliver this is Universal Banking Services. I am co-ordinating the work to modernise the payment of pensions, benefits and Tax Credits along with the introduction of banking services through post offices.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make a statement on an individual's eligibility for housing benefit when his residence is re-classified from residential or nursing home to a supported tenancy. [8496]

**Malcolm Wicks:** In these circumstances individuals are eligible for help with their rent through Housing Benefit.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to standardise the housing benefit application form in local authorities. [8202]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Earlier this year we introduced a model claim form which local authorities can choose to use. The form is designed to collect all information necessary to process housing benefit claims securely in line with the Verification Framework. We encourage all local authorities to use the form.

## DEFENCE

### New Deal

**Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many participants in the new deal have received *(a)* training and *(b)* work experience in the armed forces, including taster days, in each year since 1998. [7986]

**Mr. Ingram:** The armed forces do not participate in the new deal scheme directly because of the longer term commitment that recruits are expected to undertake. Nevertheless, in the light of a partnership that my Department has with the Department for Education and Skills Employment Service (ES), there is close liaison between ES jobcentres and the armed forces careers offices. Recruiting staff visit ES jobcentres on a regular basis to promote armed forces careers, and also remind jobcentre staff of the various work experience schemes available in the area for young people up to age 24 years, regardless of their employment status.

The Services offer work experience, Personal Development Courses (PDCs), Look at Life (LAL) Courses, Army Preparation Courses (APCs), and visits to HM Ships and Establishments. The majority of those who attend are still at school or college.

A record of the total number of participants per year is not held centrally. Available details are as follows:

*Naval Service*

(a) PDCs: Since April 1999, 89 courses have been provided for 595 students.

(b) Work Experience Participants: Since 1998 some 800 work experience placements have been made available each year.

*(c) HM Ship Visits*

| | *Officer candidates* | *Schoolchildren* |
|---|---|---|
| 1998–99 | 1,501 | 5,800 |
| 1999–2000 | 1,511 | 6,000 |
| 2000–01 | 1,990 | 6,100 |

*Army*

The figures are estimated as until recently details of numbers attending were not co-ordinated centrally:

LALs and PDCs: Number of participants per year = 1,500.

*RAF*

(a) Taster Days:

*'Opportunity for All Days'*

| | *Participants* |
|---|---|
| 1998–2000 | 1,300 |
| 2000–01 | 2,080 |

### Home Defences

**Mr. Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to review the United Kingdom's home defences. [8123]

**Mr. Ingram:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence informed Parliament on 4 October 2001, *Official Report*, columns 809–10, that we will be conducting work designed to ensure that our concepts, force structures and capabilities are exactly those that we need in order to meet the challenge of the kind of asymmetric threat that we saw on 11 September. This work will look both at the defence of the UK and our capability to counter and deter terrorism abroad.

### Reserves

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role the reserves will play in providing cover for full-time posts. [8424]

**Dr. Moonie:** Reservists are employed across the full range of duties with all the services, and play an important role in undertaking support tasks, helping alleviate shortfalls in regular manpower and bringing units up to operational manning levels. At present, there are almost 1,700 personnel on full-time reserve service. There are also over 500 reservists called out into permanent service under the Reserve Forces Act 1996 to support military operations. We expect to continue making use of the reserves in these ways.

### Armed Forces (Insurance)

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department will reopen its life and personal accident insurance scheme to soldiers in the UK armed forces; which private insurance companies his Department has selected to cover service men and women liable to be involved in the war in Afghanistan who are not covered by PAX+ (Personal Accident and Combined Services); whether this scheme will be similar to the existing PAX+ coverage; if his Department will ensure that every soldier's coverage will be full and continuous; and if he will make a statement. [8418]

**Mr. Ingram:** The Ministry of Defence has in place a comprehensive package of compensation schemes for injury or death resulting from service in the armed forces. The MOD's Armed Forces Pension Scheme and the War Pensions Scheme are absolutely unaffected by any commercial considerations. These schemes provide full and continuous cover for all personnel. For those who want additional cover Ministry of Defence facilitates the services of commercial insurers.

As a responsible employer, MOD encourages its personnel to take out the level of cover that individuals deem necessary. However, policies are commercial undertakings between individuals and insurers. The MOD neither carries any of the risk, nor gains from any of the premium. All such schemes differ, and it is for each individual to decide what benefits, restrictions and costs are deemed appropriate.

Since 1989 the MOD has facilitated a commercial personal accident policy (known as 'PAX') deemed most appropriate to armed forces personnel. On 31 August 2001, 60,035 armed forces personnel (over 25 per cent.) had a PAX policy, and just under half of these took optional life cover. On 9 October the scheme's underwriters—AIG Europe (UK)—implemented an exclusion period for new applicants from 21 September. Existing holders are unaffected; they can carry out their duties knowing that their policy remains in force wherever they are in the world, on or off duty.

A PAX exclusion period was last imposed during the Gulf War and a special scheme was introduced for personnel who had not bought PAX but wished to buy insurance. AIG Europe are working now to introduce a replacement for PAX, but I am unable to say how long it will take them to achieve this. This is a commercial matter for them.

Since 11 September, some insurance companies have put geographical exclusions on new policies for armed forces personnel (mainly for those deploying to Oman and associated area); others have increased rates. As a result, some service personnel have found themselves without the cover they desired.

However, at present there are insurers still offering worldwide personal accident and life assurance schemes, although obviously they are keeping rates and terms under close review, and the situation could change. Currently such schemes are available, for example, from NAAFI Financial—through their website and 20 centres located in service garrison areas—and from Scottish Widows through the "Forces Safeguard" Policy. While MOD does not select, endorse or recommend individual companies or products without a full 'benchmarking' process, the MOD is both currently advising members of the armed forces of known personal accident and life assurance options and also facilitating the completion of application forms, especially for those deployed.

**Mr. Keetch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many members of the armed forces in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force have joined the armed forces life insurance scheme; what percentage of each service this represents; and if he will make a statement; [8206]

(2) how many members of *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force have applied to join the armed forces life insurance scheme since 11 September; and how many have been successful. [8207]

**Mr. Ingram:** The Ministry of Defence facilitates an insurance scheme (PAX), which provides both personal accident and life cover for armed forces personnel. Optional life assurance cover is only available to those who first take out PAX personal accident cover.

The table gives details, as at 31 August 2001, of the number of Service personnel who were scheme members and also those policy holders who had elected to take out additional life cover.

| | *Navy* | *Army* | *RAF* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of personnel covered by PAX (personal accident cover) | 4,952 | 50,106 | 4,977 |
| Percentage of total trained strength | 13 | 50 | 10 |
| Number of personnel who have additional life insurance cover | 2,723 | 17,567 | 3,419 |
| Percentage of total trained strength | 7 | 18 | 7 |

Of course, many armed forces personnel have cover with other commercial providers more suited to individual circumstances, but we have no means of knowing details of these personal financial arrangements.

Figures on the number of personnel joining PAX since 11 September are not yet available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Chemical and Biological Weapons

**Mr. Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to make further studies of the UK's preparedness for defence against chemical and biological weapons. [8122]

**Mr. Hoon:** The 1998 Strategic Defence Review (Cm 3999) identified the importance of the UK's defence response to the potential use of weapons of mass destruction. The threat posed by chemical and biological weapons is under continuous review and we constantly monitor the preparedness of the UK's armed forces to meet it. The strategy paper "Defending against the Threat from Biological and Chemical Weapons" of 21 July 1999, cited on 21 July 1999, *Official Report*, column 537W, explained in more detail our policy, and the ways in which we planned to develop our capabilities further to protect our armed forces. The United Kingdom has also been active in promoting wider preparedness in this area within NATO.

I announced on 2 October that we would be continuing work on the defence of the UK and our capabilities to counter and deter terrorism abroad in light of the 11 September attacks. This work will look at our concepts, force structures and capabilities to ensure that we can meet the challenge of asymmetric threats.

Our current contingency plans, which have been reviewed recently, include being able to deal with a wide range of terrorist threats that we might face in the UK or overseas.

### Afghanistan

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the practicability of military operations in the passes of Afghanistan after winter conditions have made them impassable. [8475]

**Mr. Hoon:** The climate and topography of Afghanistan are two of the many factors we take into account when considering possible options for coalition military action.

### Aston Down

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the procedures by which the decision was taken to shut MOD Aston Down. [8574]

**Mr. Ingram:** The process that led to the close of the Ministry of Defence site Aston Down stemmed from the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) Study 2G1. This study recommended the formation of the Defence Storage and Distribution Agency (DSDA) and also recommended that savings equivalent to the closure of a minor depot could be made. As one of the minor units joining the new agency, MOD Aston Down was therefore considered, along with two other minor units, a candidate for closure.

In order to determine how best to make these savings a further study was undertaken. This study was known as the DSDA Rationalisation Study—Phase 1 (DRS1). The study was wide ranging and among other things considered the MOD's future storage requirement against storage capacity and sought to identify the way in which this could be produced in the most cost-effective manner.

Ministers decided that, subject to consultation, savings equivalent to the closure of a minor depot could be best achieved by shutting down the MOD site at Aston Down. My right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (Mr. Spellar), the then Minister for the Armed Forces, wrote to my hon. Friend on 10 January 2000 to communicate this and initiate the consultation period, during which all interested parties were given the opportunity to comment on the proposals to the Chief Executive. In the event the only comments received were from the Council of Civil Service Unions regarding the position of their members. During the consultation period, SERCO, the company running Aston Down under contract, made alternative proposals for future use of the site. SERCO's offer to purchase the site was eventually withdrawn. Once the period of consultation had ended a decision was made to close the MOD site at Aston Down.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the duties by which SERCO operated the contract to run MOD Aston Down. [8576]

**Mr. Ingram:** The Operation and Maintenance tasks at Aston Down were first contractorised in 1986 and SERCO (then RCA) won the competition.

In all there have been four consecutive contracts let - competitively with SERCO for the Aston Down requirements covering the periods 1986–89, 1989–93, 1993–96 and 1996 to 31 March 2001 when the Depot officially closed.

The tasks carried out by SERCO under the contract(s) were, as follows:

Physical storage of all stockholding.

Support in the disposal of surplus MOD holdings including surplus vehicles.

Stores accounting

Operation of all mechanical handling equipment and other on site depot vehicles.

Depot domestic support services eg cleaning, messenger/janitorial.

Fire and security.

Grounds maintenance.

Minor maintenance of depot buildings.

Processing of spent ammunition containers.

Bird control (infestation).

SERCO are currently on the site providing a site protection and guarding service while the property is being marketed for disposal.

### Aircraft (Repair and Maintenance)

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the budget for repair and maintenance of armed forces aircraft in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [8480]

**Mr. Hoon:** The maintenance of military aircraft is undertaken at a variety of locations: operating units (1st and 2nd Line); the Defence Aviation Repair Agency (3rd Line); and various aerospace companies in the UK and abroad (4th Line). Maintenance work falls into a number of categories: some is preventive or routine, other work is based around fault diagnosis and rectification.

The wide range of information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Death-in-service Payments

**Mr. Keetch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in granting Anna Homsi further payments relating to the death in active

service of Brad Tinnion; when he expects to make further payments and at what amount; and if he will make a statement. [8205]

**Mr. Ingram:** We have completed our detailed work to consider the options for responding to Ms Homsi's request for further payments with respect to the death of her partner, Bombadier Tinnion, and her responsibility for their daughter. This has taken slightly longer than expected but we expect to be able to advise Ms Homsi of our decision by the end of this month.

### Maritime Wrecks

**Ms Oona King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will publish his response to the public consultation on diving on maritime wrecks. [8073]

**Dr. Moonie:** The report on the findings of the public consultation on the protection of military wrecked vessels is still being considered. The House will be informed of the outcome shortly. A copy of the report on the public consultation will be placed in the Library of the House.

## TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

### Local Government Funding (Education)

**Tony Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when it is intended that the proposed changes to the education funding formula for local government will take effect. [4581]

**Dr. Whitehead** *[holding answer 19 July 2001]:* After considering the consultation responses to the Green Paper on local government finance, we have concluded that while reforming the education funding system is an important priority, we must ensure that there is sufficient time to develop proposals and to consult on them before a new system can be introduced. We have therefore decided to delay introduction of a reformed system until 2003–04.

### Traveller Encampments

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the terms of reference are of his Department's review of policy towards traveller encampments; when he intends to publish the conclusions of the review; and if he will make a statement. [7155]

**Ms Keeble** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Research has been conducted to review the effectiveness of the current DTLR/Home Office Good Practice Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Camping. A summary of the findings will be published shortly, during the week commencing 29 October, and a copy placed in the Library of the House.

The terms of reference for the research were to:

(i) explore the extent to which local authorities and police are aware of the guidance;

(ii) determine the extent to which the guidance has been used by, and met the requirements of, local authorities and the police;

(iii) explore whether the guidance has encouraged local authorities to take a fresh look at existing policies on unauthorised camping;

(iv) examine whether local authorities, in reviewing existing policies, are working in partnership with the local police force; liaising with neighbouring authorities; bringing together departments within their authority with an interest in the issues and involving Gypsies and Travellers;

(v) identify the extent to which local authorities and the police are making use of the statutory Crime Reduction Partnerships in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to tackle anti-social behaviour associated with unauthorised camping;

(vi) examine the impact of action taken in response to the guidance on crime and disorder associated with unauthorised encampments;

(vii) identify any gaps in the current guidance, and highlight additional examples of good practice, including examples of joint-working between local authorities and the police;

(viii) establish to what extent local authorities and police forces are making use of their current legal powers to deal with the problem of unauthorised camping.

### Devolved Administrations

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what his policy is with regard to *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in his Department giving evidence to (i) Scottish Parliament, (ii) Welsh Assembly and (iii) Northern Ireland Assembly Committees; and to what categories of document he gives (A) full access, (B) restricted access and (C) no access to (1) Scottish Parliament, (2) Welsh Assembly, (3) Northern Ireland Assembly and (4) House of Commons Select Committees. [7042]

**Dr. Whitehead:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Cabinet Office to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report,* columns 1003–05W.

### Departmental Staff

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many and what proportion of each civil service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the UK; what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement. [6802]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will estimate the number of staff employed by his Department by region and nation of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6798]

**Dr. Whitehead:** I should like to refer the hon. Gentleman to the existing publication "Civil Service Statistics 2000", published on 31 August 2001, especially to Table D (page 42). This gives a regional distribution of staff, as at April 2000, for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR(C)) and for its agencies. A copy of this should already reside in the House of Commons Library.

| *Regional distribution of staff* | *Totals on a full-time equivalent basis* |
|---|---|
| London | 4,350 |
| South East | 870 |
| South West | 1,760 |
| West Midlands | 790 |
| North West | 730 |
| North East | 370 |
| Merseyside | 80 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 740 |
| East Midlands | 550 |
| Eastern | 840 |
| Wales | 3,690 |
| Scotland | 390 |
| Northern Ireland | 0 |
| Unreported and elsewhere | 1,930 |
| Total | 17,070 |

We estimate that once the Machinery of Government changes are complete, the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR(C)) will employ approximately 3,400 staff. This represents a net reduction of 490 staff in London and SE and a net reduction of approximately 150 in the SW. The other figure shall remain the same for the other regions.

### Ministerial Travel

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement; [6891]

(2) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement. [6892]

**Dr. Whitehead:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 823W.

### Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the total expenditure was on *(a)* advertising, *(b)* polling, *(c)* focus groups, *(d)* design consultants, *(e)* caterers, *(f)* production of departmental publications and *(g)* photographs/photographers by his Department for each year since 1995 in (i) cash and (ii) real terms; what was (A) the annual percentage increase in spending on each category and (B) spending on each category as a percentage of the total departmental running costs; and if he will make a statement. [6890]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) was created in June 2001. Answers to the above questions for the former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and its predecessors could be provided only at disproportionate cost to the public purse. Expenditure on advertising by the former DETR and its predecessors in financial years since 1992–93 was reported to the House on 23 April 2001, *Official Report*, column 60W.

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what the total amount of spending by his Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of his Department's total spending this constitutes; and if he will make a statement. [6803]

**Dr. Whitehead:** An analysis, by function, of totally managed expenditure by country and region can be found in Chapter 8 of the "Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis 2001–02" (Cm 5101) published in April 2001. Tables 8.6a, 8.6b, 8.7, 8.11 and 8.12 give cash data for 1999–2000, the most recent year for which the analysis is available.

In 1999–2000, around 98 per cent. of the then DETR's expenditure on its main programmes was incurred in England. The majority of public expenditure in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is incurred by the relevant devolved Administration (see table 8.7).

### Correspondence

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) if he will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the total number of *(a)* letters from hon. Members, *(b)* letters from members of the public and *(c)* parliamentary questions from (i) hon. Members and (ii) Lords dealt with by his Department; what percentage took (A) more than one month and (B) more than three months to provide a substantive answer; and if he will make a statement; [7041]

(2) if he will place in the Library for each year since 1995 the average response time for providing a substantive answer to *(a)* hon. Members' correspondence, *(b)* correspondence from members of the public and *(c)* written parliamentary questions in the (i) Commons and (ii) Lords. [7040]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The effective handling of correspondence and parliamentary questions is an issue to which I, and ministerial colleagues, attach great importance.

General information on the volumes of correspondence received across Whitehall and on overall performance is published by the Cabinet Office. Figures for 2000 were published on 6 April 2001, *Official Report*, columns 324–28W, and on 19 July 2001, *Official Report*, columns 454–56W.

The information requested in respect of parliamentary questions prior to the formation of this Department on 8 June 2001 is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In the period 8 June to 20 July 2001, my Department answered 616 parliamentary questions from hon. Members and 60 from noble Lords. All of those questions were answered within one month.

### Special Advisers and Press Officers

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many

*(a)* special advisers and *(b)* press officers were employed (i) full time, (ii) part time and (iii) on a contract basis by his Department in each year since 1992. [6889]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions was formed on 8 June 2001. On that date, the following press officers were employed by the Department:

1 Assistant Press Officer;

16 Press Officers, one of whom was employed on a casual contract basis;

9 Senior Press Officers, of whom one worked part-time;

three Grade 7 Press Officers; and

one Grade 6 Press Officer.

There were no special advisers employed by the Department on 8 June 2001. However, a total of three were appointed between 11 June and 13 August 2001, one on a part-time basis.

## Isle of Wight Council (Borrowing)

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what permissions to borrow have been given to the Isle of Wight council for the years *(a)* 1999–2000, *(b)* 2000–01 and *(c)* 2001–02; and if he will indicate which are for a specified project or projects. [7958]

**Ms Keeble** *[holding answer 16 October 2001]:* Since 1999–2000, the Isle of Wight council has been given permission to borrow as credit approvals the following amounts:

| *Year* | £ |
|---|---|
| 1999–2000 | 10,689,000 |
| 2000–01 | 9,412,056 |
| 2001–02 | 11,385,773 |

Within these totals, the Isle of Wight Council is required to use the following amounts of credit approval for the following purposes:

£

| *Purpose* | *Credit approval* |
|---|---|
| *1999–2000* | |
| Local Transport Safety Schemes | 623,000 |
| Rural and non-rural package transport minor works | 600,000 |
| Coast protection at Gurnard: Preliminary study | 2,000 |
| Process unit strategy plan: Ryde | 9,000 |
| Wheelers Bay: Coast protection scheme | 449,000 |
| Seagrove Bay | 397,000 |
| Contaminated land project | 6,000 |
| Capital challenge[1] | 417,000 |
| New housing[2] | 178,000 |
| Purchase of dwellings[2] | 101,000 |
| Housing-related projects[2] | 50,000 |
| *2000–01* | |
| Accommodation for Community Mental Health Team | 200,000 |
| Contributions to various buildings for the Isle of Wight and Hampshire Magistrates Court Committee | 31,056 |
| Integrated transport measures | 1,404,000 |
| Transport maintenance | 1,540,000 |
| Public Transport Information Systems | 5,000 |
| Coast protection at Gurnard: Preliminary study | 10,000 |
| Process unit strategy plan: Ryde | 33,000 |
| Wheelers Bay: Coast protection scheme | 35,000 |
| Seagrove Bay | 21,000 |

£

| *Purpose* | *Credit approval* |
|---|---|
| *2001–02* | |
| Contributions to various building projects for the Isle of Wight and Hampshire Magistrates Court Committee | 20,773 |
| Provision of facilities for women firefighters | 19,000 |
| Integrated transport measures | 3,000,000 |
| Transport maintenance | 2,900,000 |

[1] Projects include school repairs, IT facilities, and community regeneration projects

[2] Capital receipts initiative

*Note:*

1. Figures for the current financial year reflect the situation at the moment. The finalised figures are likely to be different.

2. Figures only include credit approvals that are allocated for capital expenditure. They do not include trading supplementary credit approvals, which attract no revenue support grant.

## Planning

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what steps he intends to take to ensure that the rights of third parties under planning legislation are compatible with Article 6(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights. [8494]

**Ms Keeble:** We do not consider that there is any need to make changes to planning legislation as it affects third parties as a result of the Human Rights Act 1998 (which incorporates provisions from the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law).

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what guidance has been issued to local authority planning offices regarding the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. [7720]

**Ms Keeble:** The Department has not issued guidance. The Government's Human Rights Task Force issued core guidance on the Act for public authorities (including local authorities). In addition, the Local Government Association has produced a pocket guide "Acting on rights: a guide to the Human Rights Act", and a booklet "Deciding rights: applying the HRA to good practice in Local Authority decision making". The latter includes a fact sheet on Human Rights and planning.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when the review of the planning procedures is planned to commence. [8527]

**Ms Keeble:** I expect to issue a Green Paper on planning reform at the end of the year.

## Regional Assemblies

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to establish regional assemblies. [4700]

**Dr. Whitehead:** My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister announced on 2 July that the Government intend to publish a White Paper on regional governance in England which will set out the Government's proposals for taking forward elected assemblies, where people want them.

### A590

**Mr. Collins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the proposed A590 bypass at High and Low Newton. [7513]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The proposed A590 bypass was identified as a priority for delivery by 2007 in the North West's Draft Regional Planning Guidance, published in July 2000. The Secretary of State is currently considering the Panel Report from the Public Examination of the draft. It is planned to publish proposed changes this winter, with a view to issuing the final version in spring/summer 2002.

### Railtrack

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the level of Government financial support given to Railtrack in each year since its inception. [8486]

**Mr. Jamieson:** In 1994–95 and 1995–96, when Railtrack was still in the public sector, grants of £32 million and £34 million were paid to the company towards the cost of maintaining level crossings. Since its privatisation in 1996, the company has recovered that cost and other costs through access charges paid to it by train operating companies (TOCs) and others. So, although no public money was paid direct to Railtrack between 1996–97 and 2000–01, the company's profitability in those years was contingent on public money. Some 85 per cent. of its income is paid to it in access charges by TOCs, most of which are supported by public money.

In future Railtrack, or its successor body, will continue to receive income from TOCs, the large majority of which will continue to receive subsidy from the SRA. In addition, in accordance with the terms of Railtrack's 2 April agreement with Government, Railtrack received £337 million of network grant on 1 October 2001; and, when requested by the administrators, it will receive £162 million of network grant in respect of the (October 2000) final conclusions of the Rail Regulator's periodic review of access charges.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the relationship between Railtrack and the British Rail Property Board. [8487]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The British Rail Property Board became Rail Property Ltd. in July 1997. It is now a subsidiary company of the Strategic Rail Authority. It has commercial dealings with Railtrack from time to time.

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what representations he made to the directors of *(a)* Railtrack Group plc and *(b)* Railtrack plc in connection with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March. [8190]

**Mr. Jamieson:** None. The financial statements contained in Railtrack's annual report and accounts for 2000–01 are a matter for its Board of Directors and its auditors.

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions who will serve on the board of the successor company to Railtrack plc. [8183]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The identity of the directors of the proposed company has yet to be determined. Initially, the Strategic Rail Authority, in consultation with rail industry stakeholders and existing senior management of the company, would appoint directors. Members—a large majority of whom would be from the private sector—would be invited to confirm these initial appointments at a special general meeting. Subsequent board appointments would be decided by the board itself. Members would have the power to remove directors and would therefore have an effective right of veto. We anticipate this process would produce a highly competent board, representative of the interests of railway industry stakeholders.

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what financial guarantees will be given in respect to debt finance obtained by the successor company to Railtrack plc. [8188]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The Government have proposed a private sector Company Limited by Guarantee to succeed Railtrack and intend to agree a transfer scheme with the Railway Administrators. We plan to structure this new company so that it would achieve at least a BBB investment grade credit rating as the basis to raise debt finance.

The new company would be entitled to receive track access payments from train operators along with the network grants from the SRA agreed as part of the Rail Regulator's October 2000 Periodic Review and the 2 April agreement between Railtrack and Government. These sources of income would be available to help achieve at least the BBB credit rating.

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what events occurred subsequent to 3 July which required him to review the ownership and structure of the railway industry. [8192]

**Mr. Jamieson:** I refer the hon. Member to the statement made to the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 954.

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will publish the legal advice he received concerning the use of section 59 of the Railways Act 1993. [8191]

**Mr. Jamieson:** No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions does not intend to publish any such legal advice.

### Business Rates

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will estimate the number of appeals his Department has received following its recent revaluation of the business rate. [8584]

**Dr. Whitehead:** The Valuation Office Agency (VOA), an executive agency of Inland Revenue, is responsible for compiling and maintaining the non-domestic rating lists. The most recent revaluation took place on 1 April 2000. At 30 September 2001, VOA had received a total of 798,000 appeals against the rateable values shown in the new rating lists on 1 April 2000.

This figure includes 632,000 appeals made to challenge the initial valuations made by the VOA at the time of the revaluation on 1 April 2000, and 166,000 made on the grounds that the valuation has been affected by a change in circumstances that has occurred since that date.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on current procedures with regard to the appeals process for business rates with specific reference to the periods for any underpayment of rates. [8585]

**Dr. Whitehead:** Appeals against rateable values shown in the rating lists can be made at any time before a new rating list comes into force, by sending them to the local Valuation Officer of the Valuation Office Agency, an executive agency of Inland Revenue. The next revaluation is scheduled to come into force on 1 April 2005. Appeals are automatically sent to the independent Valuation Tribunal, if they are not settled by agreement between the ratepayer and the Valuation Officer.

Where an appeal is made, the ratepayer must continue to comply with the payment schedule as set out in the original demand notice from the local authority. Payments may only be altered following the settlement of an appeal and following the issue of a revised bill by the local authority, or with the formal agreement of the billing authority. Where an appeal leads to a reduction in the amount due to be paid, any previous overpayment is refunded to the ratepayer with interest.

In general, the effect of any appeal leading to a change in rateable value will be backdated either to the date that the change in value occurred, or the first day of the financial year in which the appeal was made, whichever is the later.

However, in the following cases, changes in rateable value arising from an appeal will take effect from either the date that the change in value occurred or the day that the rating list came into force, whichever is the later:

(i) deletion of properties from the rating list,

(ii) changes between domestic and non-domestic use,

(iii) splits and mergers of properties, and

(iv) alterations arising from decisions of valuation tribunals, the lands tribunal and the higher courts.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the operation of rates relief for businesses affected by foot and mouth, with specific reference to *(a)* the Valuation Office and *(b)* individual local authorities. [8586]

**Dr. Whitehead:** Local authorities have discretion to provide rate relief of up to 100 per cent. to any ratepayers suffering hardship for any reason, under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Usually, 75 per cent. of the cost of any such relief is centrally funded, with local authorities funding the remaining 25 per cent., to reflect the benefit to the local community of granting the relief.

Under Special Grant Reports 80 and 86, approved by Parliament on 2 April and 17 July 2001, the Government increased to 95 per cent. their contribution towards the cost to English rural local authorities of granting this relief to small businesses suffering hardship as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak. Guidance on the general operation of these arrangements was provided to local authorities in appendix (ii) to Special Grant Report No. 80.

This increased level of funding applies in respect of properties with rateable values of up to £12,000 in 151 English rural local authorities, and up to £50,000 in 37 of these authorities that are located in the worst affected areas, for a period of nine months from 1 April 2001. The level of Government support also increases to 98 per cent. in total where the net cost to the authority would otherwise exceed 0.4 per cent. of the authority's net budget requirement for 2001–02.

Special Grant Report No. 86 requires local authorities to submit claims for the grant by 31 March 2002. Those claims will provide information on the amount given in relief. Meanwhile, information provided by the Local Government Association shows that 117 English local authorities have received over 6,500 applications for hardship rate relief related to the foot and mouth outbreak.

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is responsible for setting rateable values, but has no role in administering rate relief. Ratepayers who believe that the rateable value of their properties has been adversely affected by the foot and mouth outbreak can appeal to the VOA for a reduction in rateable value. Around 72,000 such appeals have now been received in England. The VOA is now giving priority to settling appeals from businesses that have been worst affected by the outbreak.

The Government also extended by three months to 30 June 2001 the deadline for all appeals relating to properties in the 151 rural authority areas. This allowed any changes to rateable values arising from foot and mouth related appeals made before that date to have effect from the date the outbreak affected the property, instead of being limited to 1 April 2001. It also allowed the effect of other appeals made in these areas up to 30 June 2001 to be backdated to 1 October 2000, or the date of any change to the property giving rise to the change in value, whichever is the later. The effect of appeals made on or after 1 July 2001 in these areas will be backdated to 1 April 2001, or the date of any change to the property giving rise to the change in value, whichever is the later.

### District Housing Authorities

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on his Department's support for smaller district housing authorities, with specific reference to the selling up of arm's-length companies. [8531]

**Ms Keeble:** It is open to any authority, large or small, to seek a share of the additional resources announced in the Spending Review 2000 for authorities which establish arm's length housing management and demonstrate high standards. We have published detailed guidance which is available on the Department's website, and my officials will be happy to supplement this as necessary.

### Abandoned Vehicles

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when his Department's investigation into the problem of dumped vehicles will report. [8560]

**Mr. Jamieson:** My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement by 31 October.

### Council Tax

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on his policy of a re-banding exercise for council tax. [8587]

**Dr. Whitehead:** We have announced our intention to conduct a council tax revaluation in England. Properties will be placed into updated valuation bands according to their values on 1 April 2005, and changes will first impact on council tax bills in 2007. Revaluation should not, of course, lead to any overall increase or decrease in the council tax yield. Decisions on the band thresholds will be taken closer to the time of revaluation, when we will know more about the distribution of property values across England.

### Transport Commissioners

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will investigate the role of the Transport Commissioners and their ability to impose particular conditions in the operation of the rural transport grant. [8530]

**Ms Keeble:** Rural bus services supported by grants from my Department are provided by operators under contracts to local authorities who specify and enforce the terms of the contract. There is no specific role for the Traffic Commissioners on such services. However, all local bus services must register route and timetable with the Traffic Commissioner who can take disciplinary action if the service is not run reliably according to those details. Traffic Commissioners, at the request of the local authority, can also impose conditions on bus operators on the grounds of reducing danger to road users, congestion or pollution.

### Unitary Local Authorities

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals regarding unitary local authorities. [8488]

**Dr. Whitehead:** We have no plans for moving now to more unitary local authorities. As previously announced by my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister, we intend to publish a Regional Governance White Paper, and this will set out how we plan to take forward our Manifesto commitment that

> "provision should be made for directly elected regional government to go ahead in regions where people decided in a referendum to support it and where predominantly unitary local government is established".

### Public Interest Trusts

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he last met representatives of the Institute of Public Policy Research to discuss *(a)* Project Ariel and *(b)* public interest trusts. [8189]

**Mr. Jamieson:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions has had no such meetings.

### Birchwood Park, Warrington

**Helen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he expects the Highways Agency to lift its holding directive in order to allow Warrington borough council to determine the planning application for the re-development of Birchwood Park. [8203]

**Mr. Jamieson:** I have asked the Chief Executive of the Highways Agency, Tim Matthews, to write to my hon. Friend.

*Letter from Ginny Clarke to Helen Jones, dated 18 October 2001:*

The Roads Minister, David Jamieson, has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the Holding Direction issued to Warrington Borough Council by the Highways Agency on 27 June this year, in respect of the Birchwood Park Outline Planning Application.

The Minister's letter of 11 October in reply to yours of 18 September (copies enclosed), explained why the Direction was issued and the prerequisites for the Direction to be lifted. Since then we have now presented the independent study document to the Developer and his consultants. We hope it will form a basis for us, the local Highway Authority and the Developer to discuss the likely impact of the development on the surrounding highway network, and to determine the necessary measures to cater for that impact.

We do not wish to delay this proposal, but we must ensure that its traffic implications are properly assessed. Progress towards lifting the Direction is dependent on the Developer's consultant presenting suitable measures to provide for the impact on the trunk road and motorway network.

I am sorry that I cannot, at the moment, say when the Holding Direction will be lifted. If you would like any further information about this scheme, you may wish to contact the Agency's Development Control Officer for this particular application, Tony McVay, Room 710, Sunley Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester, M1 4BE (telephone 0161 930 5764).

### Wind Turbines

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will take action to limit construction of wind turbines in upland areas close to national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty. [4696]

**Ms Keeble:** Planning policy guidance for renewable energy projects is set out in Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 22: Renewable Energy. This gives guidance to local planning authorities on the siting of renewable energy projects.

We have no proposals to bring in specific planning controls, beyond those of normal development control, to protect the visual amenity of views looking out from National Parks and Areas Of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The guiding principle in countryside planning policies is that development should both benefit economic activity and maintain or enhance the environment. The key aim is to get the right amount of development of the right quality in the right places.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Special Constables (Thames Valley)

**Mr. Cameron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many special constables there were in the Thames Valley Police Force in *(a)* 1996, *(b)* 1997, *(c)* 1998, *(d)* 1999 and *(e)* 2000. [5758]

**Mr. Denham:** The number of serving special constables in Thames Valley Police force from 30 September 1996 to 30 September 2000 are set out in the table:

| *Year* | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| 1996 | 731 |
| 1997 | 694 |
| 1998 | 587 |
| 1999 | 514 |
| 2000 | 463 |

Statistics provided by Research, Development and Statistics department.

The Government are committed to increasing the special constabulary and we are looking at radical improvements in their management, welfare and deployment as part of the police reform process.

### Drugs

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his estimate is of the proportion of people under 25 reporting use of illegal drugs *(a)* in the last month and *(b)* in the last 12 months in each year since 1997. [5884]

**Mr. Denham:** The British Crime Survey provides data on the levels of self-reported drug use among a representative sample of the general population in England and Wales. The survey of smoking, drinking and drug use among school children provides equivalent data for those aged 11 to 15 years.

Table 1 provides the relevant data for 1998 and 2000 for those aged 16 to 24 years. Table 2 provides the equivalent data for 11 to 15-year-olds.

*Table 1: Percentages of respondents aged 16 to 24 years reporting use of illegal drugs in the last year and last month, in England and Wales*

| | *Last year* | *Last month* |
|---|---|---|
| 1998 | 29 | 19 |
| 2000 | 29 | 18 |

*Bases:*
1998 = 1,296; 2000 = 1,517
*Source:*
Drug Misuse Declared in 2000; results from the British Crime Survey, Home Office Research Study 224

*Table 2: Percentages of school children aged 11 to 15 years reporting use of illegal drugs in the last year and last month, in England*

| | *Last year* | *Last month* |
|---|---|---|
| 1998 | 11 | 7 |
| 1999 | 12 | 7 |
| 2000 | 14 | 9 |

*Bases:*
1998 = 4,647; 1999 = 9,053; 2000 = 6,855
*Source:*
Department of Health Statistical Press Notice, July 2001. Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2000

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of people under 25 who were using heroin in 1998, and in each subsequent year to date. [5760]

**Mr. Denham:** The British Crime Survey provides data on the levels of self-reported drug use among a representative sample of the general population in England and Wales. The table provides data for 1998 and 2000 on the proportion of 16 to 24-year-olds who have used heroin and the estimated number of 16 to 24-year-olds who have used heroin. Further information on population estimates and how these have been calculated is available in Chapter 5 of the main report (referenced in the table).

Estimated numbers for the younger age group (11 to 15-year-olds) are not available.

*Table 1: Percentage of 16 to 24-year-olds who have used heroin in the last year and last month use (England and Wales)*

| | *1998* | *2000* |
|---|---|---|
| Proportion using heroin in the last year | 0.30 | 0.80 |
| Estimated numbers | 17,000 | 46,000 |
| Proportion using heroin in the last month | 0.27 | 0.32 |
| Estimated numbers | 15,000 | 18,000 |

*Bases:*
1998 = 1,296; 2,000 = 1,517
*Source:*
Drug Misuse Declared in 2000; results from the British Crime Survey, Home Office Research Study 224

### Firearms

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes involving the use of firearms occurred in *(a)* 1996–97, *(b)* 1997–98, *(c)* 1999–2000 and *(d)* 2000–01; and if he will make a statement. [5781]

**Mr. Denham:** The numbers of recorded crimes involving firearms committed in England and Wales since 1996 are given in the table.

*Number of recorded crimes involving the use of firearms*

| *Year* | *Firearms other than air weapons* | *Air weapons* | *Total offences* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1996 | 6,063 | 7,813 | 13,876 |
| 1997 | 4,904 | 7,506 | 12,410 |
| 1997–98[1] | 4,903 | 7,902 | 12,805 |
| 1998–99[1] | 5,209 | 8,665 | 13,874 |
| 1999–2000[1] | 6,843 | 10,103 | 16,946 |

[1] Year ending March

There was a change in counting rules for recorded crime on 1 April 1998, and hence figures before and after this date are not directly comparable. Details for the financial year 2000–01 are not yet available.

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences involving firearms were committed in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years. [7612]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The number of recorded crimes involving firearms committed in England and Wales in the last five years are as follows:

| *Year* | *Firearms other than air weapons* | *Air weapons* | *Total offences* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1995 | 5,866 | 7,568 | 13,434 |
| 1996 | 6,063 | 7,813 | 13,876 |
| 1997 | 4,904 | 7,506 | 12,410 |
| 1997–98[1] | 4,903 | 7,902 | 12,805 |
| 1998–99[1] | 5,209 | 8,665 | 13,874 |
| 1999–2000[1] | 6,843 | 10,103 | 16,946 |

[1] Year ending March

There was a change in counting rules for recorded crime on 1 April 1998, and hence figures before and after this date are not directly comparable. Figures for 2000–01 are not yet available.

Information relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## Home Secretary (Appointment)

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what duties the police officers and the patrol car used for the photo opportunity to announce his appointment as Home Secretary were withdrawn from; and if he will make a statement; [5777]

(2) what advice he received from the duty officer at Belgravia police station about the availability of police resources for the photo opportunity to announce his appointment as Home Secretary; and if he will make a statement. [5778]

**Mr. Denham:** The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that two police officers and one police vehicle deployed from Belgravia Police Station were present at the photo opportunity outside the Home Office on 9 June. They had already been assigned to security patrol in the same vicinity, and remained available for redeployment elsewhere if the need arose.

## Police

**Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on reforms to police working conditions. [5780]

**Mr. Denham:** The police reform programme is about making the police service more effective in catching criminals and reducing crime and the fear of crime. To help ensure that the police service has the support it, managers and officers need to deliver these outputs we will be presenting the Police Negotiating Board with the outcomes we wish to achieve in respect of relevant police conditions so that it can recommend how best to deliver them.

**Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers are serving in each specialist non-territorial constabulary; and in what respects their powers differ from the general powers of police forces. [7401]

**Mr. Denham:** I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

## Asylum Seekers

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* principal applicants and *(b)* dependants would gain the right to take paid employment in the United Kingdom if the EEC draft directive laying down minimum standards on the reception of applicants for asylum in member states were implemented. [6059]

**Angela Eagle:** If the European Economic Community (EEC) draft directive were implemented there would be no change with regards to rights of employment for principal applicants. When considering dependants, this issue is to be the subject of detailed discussions in the council working groups.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers were dispersed on arrival in each month since January; and what percentage of these have since moved elsewhere and are no longer in receipt of housing aid. [7628]

**Angela Eagle** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Statistics recorded by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) show that as at the end of July 2001, 28,810[1] asylum seekers, including dependants, were being supported in NASS accommodation.

As at the end of July 2001, over 7,000 cases, excluding dependants, had ceased to receive support from NASS. But this will include both cases which had not been dispersed and cases which have received a positive asylum decision.

The requested breakdown is currently unavailable.

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 10.

**Mrs. Ellman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the value of contracts is awarded to *(a)* the private sector, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* the voluntary sector in relation to the Government's dispersal scheme for asylum seekers; and how many individuals have been accommodated by each sector. [7412]

**Angela Eagle:** I am unable to supply information on the value of individual contracts between National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and its suppliers. This information is commercial in confidence and cannot be released to third parties.

I am afraid that the NASS statistics do not show whether asylum seekers and their dependants are being accommodated by the private sector, local authorities or the voluntary sector. However I can say that approximately 60 per cent. of bedspaces are provided by private sector companies and the remainder by local authorities and the voluntary sector.

**Mrs. Ellman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the value of the contracts awarded to the Landmark Company is in relation to the dispersal of asylum seekers. [7413]

**Angela Eagle:** I am afraid that I am unable to supply the information. The value of individual contracts between National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and its suppliers is commercial in confidence and cannot be released to third parties.

### Extradition

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his strategy for improving the effectiveness, speed and enforceability of extradition procedures internationally. [7302]

**Mr. Keith Bradley:** An Extradition Bill will be introduced to streamline extradition law and procedure. The content of the Bill will be based on the Home Office review "The Law on Extradition", published in March 2001. The main elements of the Government's strategy are to establish fast-track extradition with our European Union (EU) partners building on the European Council Framework Decision in the European Arrest Warrant.

The Bill will also contain provisions to simplify and speed up the handling of extradition requests from the United Kingdom's extradition partners outside the EU.

### Habitual Criminals

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many habitual criminals *(a)* are under 21, *(b)* are hard drug users, *(c)* are without school qualifications and *(d)* were in care as children; and if he will make a statement. [7296]

**Mr. Denham:** There is no agreed definition of a habitual criminal. However data are available on offenders with three or more previous convictions, or with five or more previous convictions.

From a sample of persons sentenced for standard list offences during 1999, of those with three or more previous convictions for standard list offences, 19 per cent. were aged under 21; and of those with five or more previous convictions for standard list offences, 15 per cent. were aged under 21.

From a survey of 1,884 male prisoners sentenced in early 2000 the analysis in the table has been obtained:

| | *Male prisoners with:* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Three or more previous convictions*[1] | *Five or more previous convictions*[1] |
| *Percentage who:* | | |
| Admitted to using cocaine, crack or heroin during the previous twelve months | 57 | 60 |
| Had no school qualifications | 66 | 67 |
| Were in care as a child | 35 | 37 |

[1] Based on number of convictions admitted by the offender

### Devolved Administrations

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his policy is with regard to *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in his Department giving evidence to (i) Scottish Parliament, (ii) Welsh Assembly and (iii) Northern Ireland Assembly Committees; and to what categories of document he gives (A) full access, (B) restricted access and (C) no access to (w) Scottish Parliament, (x) Welsh Assembly, (y) Northern Ireland Assembly and (z) House of Commons select committees. [7009]

**Mr. Blunkett:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Minister of State, Cabinet Office on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 1003–05W.

### Labour Shortages

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to fast-track asylum or immigration applicants who are skilled in the area of trades where the UK has labour shortages. [8562]

**Angela Eagle:** The Home Secretary has announced further plans for controlled channels of entry to help meet skill needs in the United Kingdom economy. These will provide a legal route for those who can earn their living and contribute to the United Kingdom. But these proposals must be seen as separate from asylum. There are no plans to allow any asylum seeker who has made his way to this country to take up any form of employment other than the existing concessionary arrangements for adult asylum seekers where their application has been outstanding for longer than six months without a decision being made on it.

### Crimestoppers

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much financial assistance was given by his Department to Crimestoppers for the financial years *(a)* 2000–01 and *(b)* 2001–02; how much he proposes to grant for the 2002–03 financial year. [8302]

**Mr. Denham:** In 2000–01 the Home Office made a grant of £90,000 to Crimestoppers for their administration costs and provided £40,000 to fund an evaluation of the effectiveness of their work. We are currently considering the question of Home Office assistance to Crimestoppers now and in the future.

## HEALTH

### Breastfeeding

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of mothers *(a)* in the Stretley/Broxtowe surestart area and *(b)* in the UK breastfeed their babies. [7303]

**Jacqui Smith:** Data collected by the Stretley/Broxtowe sure start programme from local midwifery and health visiting records show that in 1999, 22 per cent. of mothers in Stretley/Broxtowe sure start area breastfed at birth, 10 per cent. at six weeks and four per cent. at four months.

Preliminary results from the first stage of the 2000 infant feeding survey show an increase in the number of mothers in the United Kingdom who initiate breastfeeding. The overall breastfeeding rates rose from 66 per cent. in 1995 to 69 per cent. in 2000. The incidence of breastfeeding in England and Wales increased from 68 per cent. in 1995 to 70 per cent. in 2000. In Scotland

and Northern Ireland the rate increased from 55 per cent. in 1995 to 63 per cent. in 2000, and 45 per cent. in 1995 to 54 per cent. in 2000 respectively. The increase has been particularly marked in low income households in England, where breastfeeding rates increased from 50 per cent. to 62 per cent. of women between 1995 and 2000.

### Digital Hearing Aids

**Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the dissemination of digital hearing aids by the NHS in the last three years; and if he will make a statement on his plans for future dissemination of hearing aids. [7396]

**Jacqui Smith:** Twenty National Health Service trusts in England have been fitting digital hearing aids for NHS patients since October 2000, as part of the Department's "modernising NHS hearing aid services" project. The project also includes increased investment in information technology, equipment and modernised patient processes. The Institute of Hearing Research is evaluating the project and its findings will help determine how changes in hearing aid services might be extended to all NHS audiology departments.

In the meantime all NHS trusts with the staff, training, equipment and experience necessary to fit digital hearing aids, are able to apply for access to the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency contract for digital hearing aids. Twenty five trusts have been given access to the contract allowing them to fit digital aids for patients outside the project.

### Waiting Times

**Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what target he has set for waiting times for in-patient treatment in West Surrey. [7702]

**Ms Blears:** The NHS Plan (published in July 2000) set a national target for waiting times. By March 2002, no one should wait longer than 15 months for in-patient treatment.

West Surrey health authority have submitted performance improvement plans which set the following targets for West Surrey:

By March 2002 there should be no more than 697 people waiting longer than 12 months for in-patient treatment and by September 2002 there should be no more than 357 people waiting longer than 12 months.

These plans have been approved by the national health service south east regional office who will be monitoring progress closely.

**Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients waiting for in-patient treatment in West Surrey have been waiting for more than one year; in which health authorities the percentage is highest; which health authority has the largest percentage waiting more than one year; which health authorities have no one waiting more than one year; and what steps he has taken to reduce variations in patients waiting over one year in the NHS. [7701]

**Ms Blears:** At the end of August 2001, 10.9 per cent. of patients in the West Surrey health authority area had waited over 12 months for in-patient treatment. This is the highest percentage in England. The health authority area with the lowest percentage is Dorset with 0.1 per cent. There are no health authorities in England without patients waiting over 12 months.

The NHS Plan contains a target to reduce the maximum waiting time to six months for in-patient treatment and three months for out-patient appointments by 2005. The Modernisation Agency and Department of Health's regional offices are working with the national health service significantly to improve access to care and to reduce variations in waiting times in the areas with the longest waits. West Surrey health authority has also developed action plans to bring about improvements locally.

### Hospices (Funding)

**Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the percentage is of revenue costs financed by public funds at the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice, Farnham. [7558]

**Ms Blears:** I understand that 17.2 per cent. of the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice's revenue costs are financed by West Surrey health authority. We are committed to tackling inequalities in access to specialist palliative care services for patients. The Cancer Plan set out our intention to support this by investing an additional £50 million in specialist palliative care by 2004. This will mean that for the first time the national health service investment in specialist palliative care services will match that of the voluntary sector.

We have required all cancer networks to develop costed strategic investment plans for palliative care, which will inform the wider NHS planning process through health improvement programmes and service and financial frameworks for 2002–03. This will be the mechanism by which we will see inequalities in palliative care service provision addressed and also more realistic support for voluntary hospices.

### Reciprocal Health Agreements

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in each of the last five years, what was the net cost to the United Kingdom of reciprocal health agreements with each non-EU country with which a reciprocal agreement is in force. [7216]

**Ms Blears** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The United Kingdom's bilateral reciprocal health agreements generally cover only immediately necessary treatment for temporary visitors. They have been negotiated on a cost waiver basis, with each of the parties to the agreement bearing the cost of treating the others' people. Net cost information is therefore not available.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been treated in overseas hospitals, funded by the NHS, in each of the last five years. [7218]

**Ms Blears** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* United Kingdom residents are personally liable for costs of hospital and other medical treatment overseas unless there are reciprocal health agreements under which costs

are assumed by Governments. Since many of these agreements are on a cost waiver basis information on numbers of patients treated in overseas hospitals is not available.

**Mr. Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in each of the last five years, what has been the net cost to the United Kingdom of reciprocal health agreements with each EU country. [7217]

**Ms Blears** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Regulation (EEC) 1408/71 is the European Commission legislation which co-ordinates the health care systems of the member states. It provides for health care to be given at the expense of the patient's home country, in a wide range of circumstances, including immediately necessary health care for temporary visitors, patients referred specifically for treatment, treatment for state pensioners who have retired to another member state, and for posted workers.

Member states pay each other for such treatments. The table gives the net cost to the United Kingdom (on a resource accounting basis). The figures reflect the fact that with many member states there are more UK pensioners and tourists going to other member states than vice versa.

*Estimated net costs to the United Kingdom of reciprocal health arrangements with EU countries during 1996 to 2000*

*£ sterling*

| *Country* | *1996* | *1997* | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | 919,000 | 1,337,000 | 1,219,000 | 1,228,000 | 1,145,000 |
| Belgium | 815,000 | 341,000 | 330,000 | 403,000 | 378,000 |
| Denmark | Waiver | Waiver | Waiver | Waiver | Waiver |
| Finland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| France | 17,796,000 | 17,049,000 | 21,989,000 | 20,618,000 | 21,674,000 |
| Germany | 169,000 | 312,000 | 434,000 | 354,000 | 363,000 |
| Greece | 54,000 | −17,000 | −117,000 | −46,000 | −139,000 |
| Ireland | 75,040,000 | 83,458,000 | 79,948,000 | 96,387,000 | 107,229,000 |
| Italy | −480,000 | −709,000 | −1,120,000 | −1,392,000 | −1,822,000 |
| Luxembourg | Waiver | Waiver | Waiver | Waiver | Waiver |
| Netherlands | 1,509,000 | 1,423,000 | 1,148,000 | 1,268,000 | 1,052,000 |
| Portugal | 398,000 | 292,000 | 246,000 | 268,000 | 239,000 |
| Spain | 34,418,000 | 27,996,000 | 23,463,000 | 26,338,000 | 23,226,000 |
| Sweden | −230,000 | −196,000 | −327,000 | −518,000 | −491,000 |

*Notes:*
1. Figures are based on latest available information and used for Resource Accounting and Budgeting purposes.
2. Claims against the UK are made in national currency and converted into sterling by using the quarterly mean exchange rates published by the EU commission.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.
4. A minus sign indicated that the UK is an overall creditor.

## Nursing Care

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate he has made of *(a)* the average length of time a nurse will need to spend per person when using the assessment tool for free nursing care and *(b)* the number of nurses required to complete the assessment by all self-funders by Christmas; [7481]

(2) which organisations his Department consulted in drawing up the assessment tool for implementing free nursing care. [7447]

**Jacqui Smith:** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The testing of the registered nursing care contribution (RNCC) tool has indicated that, on average, determinations take between 50 minutes and one hour to carry out.

By the end of this month, a total of 800 nurses in England will have undergone training in the use of the tool to enable the planned programme of determinations to be completed by the end of December.

The RNCC was developed with the input from a wide variety of organisations, nurses, as well as social services staff and the independent nursing home sector. National health service and independent sector nurses took part in its evaluation.

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if part-funders in nursing homes will be assessed under the free nursing care guidance; when the assessments will commence; when they will be concluded; what levels of payment they will be entitled to; and if he will set out for each health authority how many part-funders there are; [7480]

(2) what steps he will take to ensure that self and part-funding residents in nursing homes receive a reduction in their nursing home fee equivalent to the NHS payments for nursing care under the free nursing care assessment. [7388]

**Jacqui Smith** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Those people who have, prior to 1 October 2001, paid a council towards the cost of their care by a registered nurse (part funders) will be classed as self funders from that date and treated identically. Those people entering nursing homes after 1 October 2001 who would previously have paid a small amount to the council in respect of their care by a registered nurse will no longer need to do so. All self funders currently in a nursing home should have had a determination of their need for the care of a registered nurse carried out by the end of December this year. The actual reductions in the level of payments experienced by this group will vary depending on the level of assessed need and how the council had previously assessed them. Information on the number of people in this group by health authority is not held centrally, but there are thought to be less than 10 per health authority on average in England.

Primary care trusts and health authorities have been asked to ensure that the contracts that they establish with nursing homes reflect the National Health Service contribution towards individuals' costs of nursing care and the expectation that this will result in a similar reduction in people's care home fees.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress towards the payment of individuals eligible for free nursing help since the change in procedures. [8555]

**Jacqui Smith:** Primary care trusts and health authorities have begun the process of arranging payments to nursing homes in respect of residents who fund the full cost of their nursing care themselves from 1 October. Determinations of individual nursing need are being carried out by National Health Service registered nurses now, a programme that should be completed by the end of December 2001.

### Elderly In-patients

**Mr. Burstow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each *(a)* NHS region and *(b)* health authority the number of elderly people aged 75 years or over for each quarter from Q1 1999–2000 to Q1 2001–02 for (i) ordinary admissions, (ii) day admissions and (iii) any other category or sub-category of admission for which statistics are collected. [7391]

**Jacqui Smith** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The table shows a count of ordinary admission and day case finished consultant episodes by health authority area of residence for patients aged 75 and over in each quarter for 1999–2000. Data for 2000–01 and 2001–02 are not yet published.

*Finished consultant episodes: quarterly data by area of residence, ordinary admission/day case split, for patients aged over 75 NHS Hospitals England 1999–2000*

| | Quarter 1 | | Quarter 2 | | Quarter 3 | | Quarter 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ordinary admission | Day case | Ordinary admission | Daycase | Ordinary admission | Day case | Ordinary admission | Day case |
| *Northern & Yorkshire Regional* | | | | | | | | |
| QDD Bradford HA | 4,041 | 946 | 3,852 | 1,154 | 4,305 | 1,044 | 4,253 | 1,236 |
| QDE County Durham HA | 4,968 | 1,278 | 5,012 | 1,366 | 5,492 | 1,423 | 6,186 | 1,603 |
| QDF East Riding HA | 5,539 | 1,298 | 5,640 | 1,317 | 5,772 | 1,361 | 6,068 | 1,602 |
| QDG Gateshead & South Tyneside HA | 3,506 | 1,207 | 3,693 | 1,241 | 4,265 | 1,202 | 4,306 | 1,284 |
| QDH Leeds HA | 7,546 | 1,420 | 7,559 | 1,600 | 8,338 | 1,604 | 8,415 | 1,569 |
| QDJ Newcastle & North Tyneside HA | 4,674 | 1,467 | 4,868 | 1,547 | 5,214 | 1,629 | 5,447 | 1,810 |
| QDK North Cumbria HA | 3,017 | 722 | 2,991 | 715 | 3,424 | 811 | 3,725 | 884 |
| QDM Northumberland HA | 3,002 | 875 | 3,098 | 1,057 | 3,330 | 1,010 | 3,336 | 1,178 |
| QDN Sunderland HA | 2,041 | 995 | 2,000 | 821 | 2,631 | 971 | 2,982 | 1,002 |
| QDP Tees HA | 4,753 | 1,043 | 5,053 | 1,175 | 5,611 | 1,254 | 5,344 | 1,434 |
| QDQ Wakefield HA | 2,416 | 639 | 2,317 | 638 | 2,540 | 639 | 2,553 | 770 |
| QDR North Yorkshire HA | 6,427 | 1,868 | 6,484 | 2,138 | 7,113 | 2,158 | 6,868 | 2,308 |
| QDT Calderdale & Kirklees HA | 4,815 | 1,177 | 5,063 | 1,285 | 5,329 | 1,326 | 5,582 | 1,478 |
| *Trent Regional Office* | | | | | | | | |
| QCG Barnsley HA | 3,044 | 449 | 3,001 | 498 | 3,210 | 514 | 3,294 | 527 |
| QCH North Derbyshire HA | 3,407 | 899 | 3,347 | 941 | 3,705 | 878 | 3,995 | 1,127 |
| QCJ South Derbyshire HA | 5,536 | 1,454 | 5,820 | 1,568 | 6,261 | 1,489 | 6,438 | 1,577 |
| QCK Doncaster HA | 2,695 | 797 | 2,840 | 908 | 2,740 | 997 | 3,144 | 1,191 |
| QCL Leicestershire HA | 9,057 | 2,058 | 9,463 | 2,235 | 9,715 | 2,293 | 9,452 | 2,375 |
| QCM Lincolnshire HA | 6,522 | 1,417 | 6,710 | 1,626 | 7,256 | 1,617 | 7,279 | 1,709 |
| QCN North Nottinghamshire HA | 3,944 | 769 | 3,879 | 821 | 4,718 | 810 | 4,965 | 846 |
| QCP Nottingham HA | 6,649 | 1,286 | 7,015 | 1,352 | 7,786 | 1,405 | 8,002 | 1,425 |
| QCQ Rotherham HA | 1,883 | 370 | 1,836 | 511 | 2,006 | 529 | 2,105 | 575 |
| QCR Sheffield HA | 5,331 | 1,150 | 5,318 | 1,292 | 5,874 | 1,464 | 5,986 | 1,647 |
| QDL South Humber HA | 2,441 | 626 | 2,486 | 720 | 2,612 | 736 | 2,630 | 878 |
| *West Midlands Regional Office* | | | | | | | | |
| QD9 Birmingham HA | 8,317 | 1,966 | 8,280 | 2,176 | 9,134 | 2,150 | 9,419 | 2,362 |
| QEA Coventry HA | 2,655 | 621 | 2,702 | 659 | 3,001 | 767 | 2,920 | 814 |
| QEC Dudley HA | 1,969 | 854 | 2,048 | 836 | 2,237 | 860 | 2,046 | 857 |
| QED Herefordshire HA | 1,426 | 419 | 1,311 | 369 | 1,483 | 538 | 1,474 | 542 |
| QEE Sandwell HA | 2,206 | 719 | 2,391 | 792 | 2,735 | 745 | 2,793 | 861 |
| QEF Shropshire HA | 3,166 | 983 | 3,280 | 1,029 | 3,465 | 1,069 | 3,534 | 1,180 |
| QEG Solihull HA | 1,289 | 478 | 1,463 | 502 | 1,624 | 494 | 1,610 | 549 |
| QEH North Staffordshire HA | 3,845 | 1,535 | 4,029 | 1,540 | 4,064 | 1,526 | 4,050 | 1,584 |
| QEJ South Staffordshire HA | 4,276 | 1,637 | 4,357 | 1,563 | 4,707 | 1,541 | 4,691 | 1,606 |
| QEK Walsall HA | 2,019 | 419 | 2,007 | 468 | 2,421 | 448 | 2,561 | 560 |
| QEL Warwickshire HA | 4,240 | 1,115 | 4,109 | 1,147 | 4,697 | 1,158 | 4,592 | 1,226 |
| QEM Wolverhampton HA | 1,778 | 410 | 1,957 | 458 | 2,359 | 508 | 2,590 | 656 |
| QEN Worcestershire HA | 4,010 | 1,166 | 3,861 | 1,187 | 4,106 | 1,249 | 4,025 | 1,368 |
| *North West Regional Office* | | | | | | | | |
| QC1 South Lancashire HA | 2,802 | 1,087 | 2,838 | 990 | 2,872 | 1,103 | 2,880 | 1,091 |
| QC2 Liverpool HA | 5,470 | 1,177 | 5,571 | 1,176 | 6,158 | 1,150 | 6,362 | 1,216 |
| QC3 Manchester HA | 3,411 | 1,304 | 3,516 | 1,486 | 3,737 | 1,469 | 3,583 | 1,583 |
| QC4 Morecambe Bay HA | 2,873 | 1,189 | 2,834 | 1,402 | 3,092 | 1,275 | 3,109 | 1,378 |

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*Finished consultant episodes: quarterly data by area of residence, ordinary admission/day case split, for patients aged over 75 NHS Hospitals England 1999–2000*

| | Quarter 1 | | Quarter 2 | | Quarter 3 | | Quarter 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ordinary admission | Day case | Ordinary admission | Daycase | Ordinary admission | Day case | Ordinary admission | Day case |
| QC5 St. Helens & Knowsley HA | 3,246 | 794 | 3,328 | 805 | 3,647 | 824 | 3,662 | 831 |
| QC6 Salford & Trafford HA | 4,456 | 1,751 | 4,520 | 1,854 | 4,654 | 1,830 | 4,768 | 1,806 |
| QC7 Sefton HA | 2,726 | 1,073 | 2,863 | 1,143 | 3,284 | 1,048 | 2,865 | 1,163 |
| QC8 Stockport HA | 2,269 | 1,157 | 2,270 | 1,302 | 2,444 | 1,313 | 2,706 | 1,272 |
| QC9 West Pennine HA | 4,355 | 1,347 | 4,443 | 1,623 | 4,512 | 1,768 | 4,622 | 2,025 |
| QCT Bury & Rochdale HA | 3,607 | 1,142 | 3,517 | 1,185 | 3,867 | 1,180 | 4,139 | 1,412 |
| QCV North Cheshire HA | 2,754 | 710 | 2,824 | 782 | 3,461 | 785 | 2,911 | 824 |
| QCW South Cheshire HA | 5,161 | 1,656 | 5,644 | 1,847 | 5,935 | 1,789 | 6,255 | 1,911 |
| QCX East Lancashire HA | 5,365 | 1,863 | 5,391 | 2,063 | 5,772 | 1,994 | 5,831 | 2,154 |
| QCY North West Lancashire HA | 4,643 | 2,357 | 4,516 | 2,477 | 4,662 | 2,433 | 5,063 | 2,897 |
| QDA Wigan & Bolton HA | 5,000 | 1,447 | 5,203 | 1,629 | 5,651 | 1,565 | 6,184 | 1,721 |
| QDC Wirral HA | 4,434 | 507 | 4,251 | 559 | 4,805 | 618 | 4,654 | 734 |
| *Eastern Regional Office* | | | | | | | | |
| QA6 Bedfordshire HA | 3,967 | 1,008 | 4,045 | 958 | 4,320 | 945 | 3,586 | 1,036 |
| QAX North Essex HA | 7,343 | 1,548 | 7,567 | 1,685 | 7,854 | 1,846 | 8,652 | 1,889 |
| QAY South Essex HA | 6,271 | 1,787 | 6,259 | 1,874 | 6,705 | 1,816 | 6,590 | 2,142 |
| QCF Suffolk HA | 7,961 | 1,745 | 7,805 | 1,889 | 8,418 | 1,906 | 8,060 | 2,089 |
| QEP East & North Hertfordshire HA | 4,071 | 1,286 | 4,148 | 1,414 | 4,328 | 1,327 | 4,969 | 1,515 |
| QEQ West Hertfordshire HA | 4,285 | 1,094 | 4,258 | 1,205 | 4,719 | 1,177 | 4,683 | 1,278 |
| QER Cambridge HA | 6,525 | 1,436 | 6,734 | 1,605 | 7,420 | 1,570 | 8,244 | 1,772 |
| QET Norfolk HA | 10,043 | 2,429 | 9,717 | 2,783 | 10,608 | 2,796 | 10,525 | 2,948 |
| *London Regional Office* | | | | | | | | |
| QA2 Hillingdon HA | 1,706 | 467 | 1,665 | 455 | 1,983 | 510 | 1,921 | 549 |
| QA3 Kensington Chelsea & Westminster | 2,495 | 667 | 2,380 | 680 | 2,515 | 667 | 2,462 | 762 |
| QA4 Enfield & Haringey HA | 2,884 | 869 | 2,735 | 942 | 3,094 | 941 | 2,955 | 1,089 |
| QA5 Redbridge & Waltham Forest HA | 3,064 | 1,078 | 3,102 | 1,103 | 3,422 | 1,024 | 3,324 | 1,143 |
| QAA Bexley & Greenwich HA | 3,086 | 838 | 3,199 | 813 | 3,345 | 838 | 3,226 | 999 |
| QAC Bromley HA | 2,672 | 787 | 2,519 | 842 | 2,713 | 914 | 2,647 | 929 |
| QAD Croydon HA | 2,057 | 703 | 2,073 | 683 | 2,267 | 721 | 2,230 | 721 |
| QAG Kingston & Richmond HA | 2,520 | 638 | 2,583 | 700 | 2,929 | 757 | 2,795 | 746 |
| QAH Lambeth Southwark & Lewisham | 3,668 | 1,026 | 3,930 | 1,062 | 4,444 | 1,018 | 4,281 | 1,084 |
| QAJ Merton Sutton & Wandsworth HA | 4,151 | 1,173 | 4,295 | 1,177 | 4,507 | 1,143 | 4,565 | 1,189 |
| QAP Barking & Havering HA | 3,123 | 925 | 3,126 | 919 | 3,570 | 985 | 3,549 | 1,005 |
| QAQ Barnet HA | 2,583 | 592 | 2,462 | 616 | 2,677 | 568 | 2,786 | 722 |
| QAR Brent & Harrow HA | 2,769 | 880 | 2,618 | 907 | 2,922 | 958 | 3,111 | 1,080 |
| QAT Camden & Islington HA | 2,357 | 446 | 2,420 | 546 | 2,584 | 481 | 2,650 | 548 |
| QAV Ealing Hammersmith & Hounslow | 3,897 | 1,075 | 3,767 | 1,143 | 4,333 | 1,254 | 4,146 | 1,213 |
| QAW East London & The City HA | 3,500 | 739 | 3,650 | 827 | 3,994 | 839 | 3,974 | 890 |
| *South East Regional Office* | | | | | | | | |
| QA7 Berkshire HA | 4,988 | 1,084 | 4,900 | 1,193 | 5,281 | 1,190 | 5,041 | 1,361 |
| QA8 Buckinghamshire HA | 4,499 | 911 | 4,602 | 1,015 | 5,145 | 1,051 | 4,892 | 1,149 |
| QAE East Kent HA | 6,732 | 1,666 | 6,010 | 1,699 | 6,945 | 2,020 | 5,450 | 2,176 |
| QAF West Kent HA | 7,680 | 1,344 | 7,187 | 1,448 | 7,295 | 1,543 | 7,448 | 1,676 |
| QAK East Surrey HA | 3,714 | 877 | 3,416 | 950 | 3,547 | 866 | 3,401 | 883 |
| QAL West Surrey HA | 4,459 | 1,248 | 4,535 | 1,478 | 5,149 | 1,402 | 4,782 | 1,364 |
| QAM East Sussex Brighton & Hove HA | 8,022 | 2,126 | 8,268 | 2,309 | 8,590 | 2,208 | 8,539 | 2,420 |
| QAN West Sussex HA | 6,772 | 2,071 | 6,885 | 2,317 | 7,418 | 2,422 | 7,612 | 2,612 |
| QCC Northamptonshire HA | 4,976 | 1,171 | 4,813 | 1,338 | 5,171 | 1,302 | 5,646 | 1,384 |
| QCE Oxfordshire HA | 4,602 | 1,092 | 4,462 | 1,132 | 4,790 | 1,104 | 4,666 | 1,002 |
| QD1 North & Mid Hampshire HA | 4,127 | 1,054 | 4,099 | 1,005 | 4,136 | 930 | 4,351 | 1,048 |
| QD2 Portsmouth & South East Hampshire | 5,185 | 1,093 | 4,896 | 1,312 | 5,823 | 1,187 | 5,634 | 1,317 |
| QD3 Southampton & South West Hampshire | 5,541 | 1,688 | 5,751 | 1,893 | 6,308 | 1,761 | 6,325 | 2,098 |
| QD4 Isle of Wight HA | 1,542 | 223 | 1,400 | 258 | 1,562 | 261 | 1,500 | 260 |
| *South West Regional Office* | | | | | | | | |
| QD5 Somerset HA | 5,308 | 1,421 | 5,082 | 1,378 | 5,676 | 1,443 | 5,832 | 1,807 |
| QD6 South & West Devon HA | 6,721 | 1,716 | 6,481 | 1,788 | 6,730 | 1,733 | 6,694 | 1,823 |
| QD7 Wiltshire HA | 4,560 | 1,191 | 4,606 | 1,409 | 4,832 | 1,383 | 5,108 | 1,422 |
| QD8 Avon HA | 9,163 | 2,552 | 9,058 | 2,679 | 9,678 | 2,792 | 9,529 | 3,058 |
| QDV Cornwall & Isles of Scilly HA | 6,240 | 2,416 | 6,503 | 2,386 | 6,957 | 2,096 | 6,954 | 1,521 |
| QDW Dorset HA | 10,877 | 3,491 | 10,436 | 3,844 | 10,812 | 3,775 | 11,506 | 4,014 |
| QDX North & East Devon HA | 5,839 | 1,626 | 5,662 | 1,706 | 6,312 | 1,831 | 6,833 | 1,901 |
| QDY Gloucestershire HA | 5,007 | 1,533 | 5,004 | 1,608 | 5,347 | 1,645 | 5,307 | 1,764 |
| QW1 Gwent HA | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| QW2 Bro Taf HA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| QW3 Dyfed Powys HA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| QW4 North Wales HA | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Finished consultant episodes: quarterly data by area of residence, ordinary admission/day case split, for patients aged over 75 NHS Hospitals England 1999–2000*

| | Quarter 1 | | Quarter 2 | | Quarter 3 | | Quarter 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ordinary admission | Day case | Ordinary admission | Daycase | Ordinary admission | Day case | Ordinary admission | Day case |
| QW5 Iechyd Morgannwg HA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Wales (other) | 965 | 308 | 1,122 | 342 | 1,165 | 354 | 1,153 | 482 |
| Scotland | 197 | 18 | 300 | 22 | 200 | 26 | 171 | 19 |
| Foreign | 1,413 | 899 | 1,425 | 838 | 1,350 | 777 | 1,406 | 761 |
| Northern Ireland | 13 | 1 | 17 | 1 | 14 | 0 | 13 | 0 |
| Not known | 331 | 25 | 413 | 33 | 483 | 33 | 485 | 25 |
| Total | 437,494 | 119,175 | 439,061 | 127,784 | 476,222 | 128,497 | 480,467 | 138,903 |

*Note:*
1. An FCE is defined as a period of patient care under one consultant in one health care provider. The figures do not represent the number of patients, as one person may have several episodes within the year.
2. Figures in this table have not yet been adjusted for shortfalls in data.

*Source:*
Hospital Episodes Statistics (HES), Department of Health

## Dental Services

**Mrs. Helen Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost of a molar root treatment is in *(a)* the general dental service and *(b)* the personal dental services. [8064]

**Ms Blears:** The item of service fee currently paid to a dentist for providing a molar root treatment (endodontics) under general dental services is £68.65 per molar tooth. Under the personal dental service's arrangements, treatments are not remunerated on an item of service basis but are included as part of the overall contractual arrangements, which, for example, may be by way of salary, capitation payments, modified item of service or block contract, the category of patient treated and the range of treatments being provided under each individual pilot's arrangements.

Patients pay the same charge for treatment under the personal dental service as they do under the general dental service. The current charge for molar root treatment is £54.92 per molar tooth.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have de-listed themselves from taking NHS adult patients by each health authority area, in each of the last six years. [8553]

**Ms Blears:** The table shows the number of the General Dental Service (GDS) dentists in each health authority whose adult registration numbers fell to zero during each of the last five financial years ending in March. The vast majority of these dentists are leavers from the GDS. They will leave for a number of reasons, for example retirement, and some are absent only temporarily.

Those people who wish to see a national health service dentist should now be able to do so by contacting NHS Direct.

*General dental service: Number of dentists whose adult registrations fell to zero during the financial year: England*

| Health authority | 2000–01 | 1999–2000 | 1998–99 | 1997–98 | 1996–97 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hillingdon | 6 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 10 |
| Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster | 19 | 20 | 29 | 18 | 23 |
| Enfield and Haringey | 18 | 14 | 17 | 10 | 13 |
| Redbridge and Waltham Forest | 8 | 3 | 11 | 6 | 4 |
| Bedfordshire | 11 | 11 | 6 | 10 | 7 |
| Berkshire | 16 | 12 | 12 | 20 | 11 |
| Buckinghamshire | 15 | 14 | 16 | 14 | 12 |
| Cambridge and Huntingdon | — | — | — | 9 | 5 |
| Bexley and Greenwich | 13 | 8 | 11 | 8 | 7 |
| Bromley | 6 | 5 | 6 | 12 | 8 |
| Croydon | 12 | 6 | 12 | 11 | 11 |
| East Kent | 13 | 17 | 10 | 12 | 18 |
| West Kent | 27 | 27 | 24 | 37 | 23 |
| Kingston and Richmond | 11 | 13 | 10 | 4 | 6 |
| Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham | 18 | 24 | 38 | 19 | 29 |
| Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth | 24 | 17 | 19 | 17 | 11 |
| East Surrey | 10 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 18 |
| West Surrey | 16 | 18 | 10 | 19 | 9 |
| East Sussex, Brighton and Hove | 20 | 20 | 17 | 10 | 12 |
| West Sussex | 18 | 18 | 17 | 18 | 15 |
| Barking and Havering | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 6 |
| Barnet | 7 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 11 |
| Brent and Harrow | 7 | 14 | 13 | 8 | 11 |
| Camden and Islington | 23 | 20 | 22 | 19 | 16 |
| Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow | 25 | 24 | 38 | 35 | 22 |
| East London and The City | 13 | 20 | 17 | 15 | 14 |
| North Essex | 20 | 13 | 18 | 19 | 16 |
| South Essex | 24 | 11 | 12 | 6 | 24 |
| South Lancashire | 6 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 3 |

*General dental service: Number of dentists whose adult registrations fell to zero during the financial year: England*

| *Health authority* | *2000–01* | *1999–2000* | *1998–99* | *1997–98* | *1996–97* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Liverpool | 7 | 8 | 4 | 11 | 8 |
| Manchester | 9 | 7 | 11 | 12 | 7 |
| Morecambe Bay | 5 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 9 |
| St. Helens and Knowsley | 1 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Salford and Trafford | 7 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 9 |
| Sefton | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Stockport | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| West Pennine | 5 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 9 |
| East Norfolk | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | 10 | 12 |
| Northamptonshire | 10 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 10 |
| North West Anglia | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | 5 | 6 |
| Oxfordshire | 15 | 15 | 8 | 14 | 12 |
| Suffolk | 8 | 5 | 8 | 13 | 6 |
| Barnsley | 4 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| North Derbyshire | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| South Derbyshire | 11 | 7 | 15 | 5 | 2 |
| Doncaster | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Leicestershire | 16 | 13 | 7 | 24 | 7 |
| Lincolnshire | 7 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| North Nottinghamshire | 6 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 2 |
| Nottingham | 10 | 15 | 17 | 16 | 5 |
| Rotherham | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Sheffield | 5 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 9 |
| Bury and Rochdale | 10 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 5 |
| North Cheshire | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| South Cheshire | 13 | 9 | 26 | 6 | 14 |
| East Lancashire | 8 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| North West Lancashire | 11 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 8 |
| North and Mid Hampshire | 11 | 7 | 12 | 11 | 12 |
| Portsmouth and South East Hampshire | 11 | 8 | 11 | 5 | 9 |
| Southampton and South West Hampshire | 15 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 12 |
| Isle of Wight | 3 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Somerset | 10 | 9 | 10 | 4 | 13 |
| South and West Devon | 12 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 17 |
| Wiltshire | 14 | 14 | 13 | 9 | 9 |
| Avon | 26 | 27 | 21 | 30 | 24 |
| Birmingham | 26 | 21 | 18 | 13 | 15 |
| Wigan and Bolton | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 |
| Wirral | 7 | 11 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| Bradford | 6 | 13 | 9 | 6 | 4 |
| County Durham | 8 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| East Riding | 5 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 9 |
| Gateshead and South Tyneside | 4 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 8 |
| Leeds | 15 | 15 | 11 | 14 | 13 |
| Newcastle and North Tyneside | 15 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| North Cumbria | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| South Humber | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Northumberland | 4 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 |
| Sunderland | 4 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| Tees | 14 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 4 |
| Wakefield | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| North Yorkshire | 10 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| Calderdale and Kirklees | 7 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 9 | 14 | 9 | 7 | 10 |
| Dorset | 12 | 16 | 9 | 11 | 16 |
| North and East Devon | 20 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 11 |
| Gloucestershire | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Coventry | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| Dudley | 5 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Herefordshire | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Sandwell | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Shropshire | 3 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 0 |
| Solihull | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| North Staffordshire | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| South Staffordshire | 6 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 3 |
| Walsall | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Warwickshire | 8 | 15 | 12 | 3 | 3 |
| Wolverhampton | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Worcestershire | 8 | 10 | 9 | 3 | 9 |
| East and North Hertfordshire | 13 | 9 | 6 | 13 | 9 |
| West Hertfordshire | 13 | 10 | 5 | 15 | 7 |
| Cambridge | 16 | 19 | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— |
| Norfolk | 12 | 17 | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— |
| Total | 1,001 | 954 | 926 | 885 | 851 |

[1] In April 1999 Cambridge and Huntingdon, East Norfolk and North West Anglia were amalgamated into two HAs, namely Cambridge HA and Norfolk HA. For 1998–99 the total number of dentists in these HAs was 19.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists still take NHS adult patients, broken down by each health authority area. [8552]

**Ms Blears:** Most dentists continue to treat some adults and children on the national health service. Only about 1,000 general dental service (GDS) dentists have no adult registrations at all and a proportion of these are practitioners who specialise in children's work. Most dentists ceasing to have adult patients have left the GDS, frequently because of retirement.

The table shows the number of GDS dentists in each health authority that have adult registered patients at the end of June 2001. Dentists working in more than one health authority are counted only once in their main health authority.

*General dental service: Number of dentists with adult registered patients at 30 June 2001, England*

| *Health authority* | *Number of dentists* |
|---|---|
| Avon | 360 |
| Barking and Havering | 89 |
| Barnet, Enfield and Haringey | 305 |
| Barnsley | 53 |
| Bedfordshire | 136 |
| Berkshire | 239 |
| Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich | 243 |
| Birmingham | 272 |
| Bradford | 130 |
| Brent and Harrow | 169 |
| Buckinghamshire | 247 |
| Bury and Rochdale | 106 |
| Calderdale and Kirklees | 169 |
| Cambridge | 177 |
| Camden and Islington | 175 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 149 |
| County Durham | 145 |
| Coventry | 73 |
| Croydon | 123 |
| Doncaster | 80 |
| Dorset | 239 |
| Dudley | 78 |
| Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow | 259 |
| East Kent | 167 |
| East Lancashire | 132 |
| East London and The City | 160 |
| East Riding | 135 |
| East Surrey | 171 |
| East Sussex, Brighton and Hove | 278 |
| Gateshead and South Tyneside | 110 |
| Gloucestershire | 190 |
| Herefordshire | 61 |
| Hertfordshire | 399 |
| Hillingdon | 84 |
| Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and South East Hampshire | 187 |
| Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster | 167 |
| Kingston and Richmond | 117 |
| Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham | 216 |
| Leeds | 241 |
| Leicestershire | 248 |
| Lincolnshire | 128 |
| Liverpool | 124 |
| Manchester | 151 |
| Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth | 222 |
| Morecambe Bay | 97 |
| Newcastle and North Tyneside | 144 |
| Norfolk | 209 |
| North and East Devon | 173 |
| North and Mid Hampshire | 164 |
| North Cheshire | 84 |
| North Cumbria | 93 |
| North Derbyshire | 97 |
| North Essex | 233 |
| North Nottinghamshire | 92 |
| North Staffordshire | 103 |
| North West Lancashire | 133 |
| North Yorkshire | 262 |
| Northamptonshire | 143 |
| Northumberland | 85 |
| Nottingham | 196 |
| Oxfordshire | 205 |
| Redbridge and Waltham Forest | 146 |
| Rotherham | 66 |
| Salford and Trafford | 142 |
| Sandwell | 76 |
| Sefton | 78 |
| Sheffield | 174 |
| Shropshire | 134 |
| Solihull | 56 |
| Somerset | 149 |
| South and West Devon | 228 |
| South Cheshire | 221 |
| South Derbyshire | 154 |
| South Essex | 204 |
| South Humber | 65 |
| South Lancashire | 86 |
| South Staffordshire | 157 |
| Southampton and South West Hampshire | 172 |
| St. Helens and Knowsley | 87 |
| Stockport | 110 |
| Suffolk | 188 |
| Sunderland | 75 |
| Tees | 171 |
| Wakefield | 89 |
| Walsall | 44 |
| Warwickshire | 151 |
| West Kent | 301 |
| West Pennine | 134 |
| West Surrey | 248 |
| West Sussex | 277 |
| Wigan and Bolton | 160 |
| Wiltshire | 183 |
| Wirral | 105 |
| Wolverhampton | 58 |
| Worcestershire | 152 |
| England | 15,058 |

## Child Abuse (Norfolk)

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have died in the last five years as a result of brutality inflicted on them by *(a)* relatives and *(b)* people known to the child as a "family friend", while the child was on the at risk register of the social services department of Norfolk county council; and if he will make a statement. [7546]

**Jacqui Smith:** The information requested is not collected centrally. However, we are informed by the social services department of Norfolk county council that one child has died in the last five years as a result of injuries inflicted on them by a relative, while the child was on Norfolk's child protection register. The social services department is not aware of any registered child who has died in the last five years as a result of injuries inflicted on them by a person known to the child as a family friend.

### Drug Misuse

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his estimate is the number of drug misusers who were not given immediate access to appropriate treatment, upon application, in each year since 1997. [6485]

**Ms Blears:** This information is not available centrally. There has been an increase of 16 per cent. in the number of people entering treatment over the last three years. In fact, the latest information from the regional drug misuse databases published on 11 October, indicates that the number of users in treatment was approximately 118, 500.

### General Medical Council

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the General Medical Council will be required by him to take in order to advise complainants of the availability of judicial review of its decisions. [6967]

**Ms Blears:** None. In August we published "Modernising Regulation in the Health Professions" in which we have consulted on the functions of the proposed Council for the Regulation of Healthcare Professions. These include a power to make public interest appeals in extreme cases against individual decisions of the regulatory bodies.

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of responses to complainants and subsequent notification of decisions the General Medical Council has failed to issue within its own target times for each year since 1997. [6969]

**Ms Blears:** Since July 2000 the General Medical Council has set itself a series of explicit service standards for dealing with fitness to practise complaints. It reports on its performance against these standards each year. It aims to acknowledge all letters promptly and to keep complainants informed of progress but it does not hold separate performance information on these activities.

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what provision the General Medical Council is making to fast track complaints against doctors where *(a)* previous disciplinary action has been taken against them and *(b)* another complaint is presently being considered by the General Medical Council; [6964]

(2) in how many cases since January 1999 in which disciplinary action was subsequently taken, including admonishment, by the Professional Conduct Committee of the General Medical Council, an interim suspension order was imposed. [6970]

**Ms Blears:** I understand that the chief executive of the General Medical Council wrote to my hon. Friend on 31 August providing the information requested.

**Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proposals his Department has to ensure that public interest immunity is not a barrier to providing complainants to the General Medical Council with an adequate explanation of the reasons for decisions of the Professional Conduct Committee; [6963]

(2) what proposals his Department has to ensure that the General Medical Council provides complainants with an explanation of the reasons for decisions in disciplinary hearings. [6968]

**Ms Blears:** The General Medical Council recognises the importance of providing information to complainants about the reasons for the Professional Conduct Committee's decisions and it does so in all cases.

### Care Homes

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance the Government will provide on the training appropriate for registered managers; who will decide what training is appropriate; who will pay for the training; and if he will make a statement. [8062]

**Jacqui Smith:** Guidance on the training appropriate for registered managers for Care Homes for Older People has been given in the National Minimum Standards for Care Homes for Older People published in March 2001. Guidance on the training appropriate for registered managers of Care Homes for Younger Adults and for Children's Homes will be given in the relevant set of National Minimum Standards. These standards are presently being finalised and will be published later in the year.

It is an employer's responsibility to ensure that they and their staff receive the relevant training for the work that they have to undertake. However, help towards the cost of funding for national vocational qualifications is available from the learning and skills councils. The Department also contributes towards the cost of training social care workers via the training support programme grant and this year. The Department has also provided £2 million towards the implementation of the national training strategy for social care workers.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent the views of care home staff on the Care Homes Regulations 2001 will be collected by the Care Standards Commission; where the results will be published; and if he will make a statement. [8060]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Department completed the consultation exercise on the draft Care Homes Regulations 2001 on 21 September. Copies of that document were made available widely to interested groups and individuals through direct mailing, the National Care Standards Commission internet site and the Department's distribution unit. Care workers were welcome to give their views as were any other interested parties. Responses were received from a few individual care workers. In addition, under section 7 of the Care Standards Act 2000, the National Care Standards Commission will have the responsibility of keeping my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State informed about the availability and quality of the services it regulates. The Commission will also be required to make public information about these services. Much of this information will be obtained through the inspection processes that the Commission will adopt. Section 31(3)(d) gives the Commission powers to interview any person employed by a regulated provider. It is likely that staff views would be sought through this power.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action will be taken against a registered provider if a care home worker refuses to make available their passport, as required in section 19(4)(c) of the Care Home Regulations 2001: and if he will make a statement. [8061]

**Jacqui Smith:** Section 19(4)(c) of the draft Care Homes Regulations will require the registered person to obtain certain information regarding the fitness of a person who is working or seeking to work in the care home. Schedule 5 of the draft Regulations sets out the details of the information for the purpose of establishing identity to be provided by the care worker. The care worker is required to provide a birth certificate, a passport if he or she has one and a recent photograph. Where a person who has a passport refuses to provide that document to the registered person then an application for employment should be refused or employment terminated. No action will be taken against a provider who refuses to employ or terminates the employment of someone who has a passport but who refuses to provide that document.

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* residential care homes and *(b)* nursing care home beds were available in England and Wales in each of the last four years. [7605]

**Jacqui Smith:** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The table shows the requested information for England. Information on the number of homes and beds in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Assembly.

*Number[1] of residential care homes and registered nursing beds in England, 1997 to 2000 (as at 31 March)*

| | [2]1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* Residential care homes | 24,480 | 24,880 | 24,820 | 24,830 |
| *(b)* Registered nursing beds in nursing homes[3] | 196,300 | 205,600 | 202,200 | 193,300 |

[1] Rounded numbers
[2] This refers to the period 1 October 1997 to 31 March 1998
[3] Registered beds in general and rmental nursing homes, private hospitals and clinics.
*Source:*
Department of Health annual returns

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to reverse the trend in the number of residential care home places. [6510]

**Jacqui Smith:** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* On 9 October, we announced an extra £300 million investment over this year and next year for local councils to spend on community care services. This major cash investment will be used to reduce bed blocking and will help to stabilise the care home sector, giving them greater confidence in the future.

We, also launched a new agreement "Building Capacity and Partnership in Care" on 9 October. The agreement focuses on councils and the independent sector working together as partners throughout the commissioning process. This should promote a more strategic, inclusive and consistent approach to capacity planning at a local level.

## Electromagnetic Fields

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans the Government have for researching the non-thermal effects of electromagnetic fields; and if he will make a statement. [7974]

**Ms Blears:** Electromagnetic fields (EMF) can arise from a wide range of sources including telecommunications at high frequencies and the electric power supply at low frequencies. The Stewart report on mobile phones and health made a recommendation that a substantial research programme should be set up under the aegis of a demonstrably independent panel and financed by the mobile phone companies and the public sector. The mobile telecommunications and health research programme, jointly funded by Government and industry, has now been set up under the direction of an independent programme management committee. The committee is currently assessing a range of research proposals, including some that are designed to look at non-thermal effects. Information about this programme can be found on the Department's website at www.doh.gov.uk/mobilephones.

Research into the broader area of electromagnetic fields and health is continuing within the Department's radiation protection research programme, the work of the National Radiological Protection Board, the EMF Biological Research Trust and that of the World Health Organisation to which the United Kingdom contributes funding and expertise.

## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he ensures the identification of children who may have severe untreated attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; what progress has been made towards ensuring that the condition is recognised by teachers and school nurses in the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [7333]

**Jacqui Smith:** In guidance published in October 2000 the National Institute for Clinical Excellence identified that of an estimated 69,000 six to 16-year-olds in England who met the diagnostic criteria for hyperkinetic disorder, for example severe attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), some 45,000 who might benefit from the drug methylphenidate were not receiving this treatment. The guidance also made it clear that a diagnosis of ADHD should be based on a timely, comprehensive assessment conducted by a child/adolescent psychiatrist or a paediatrician with expertise in this disorder. Referrals for specialist assessment can come from a number of sources including family members, general practitioners, social workers and teachers.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is promoting a number of initiatives designed to help schools and teachers work with children with a range of emotional and behavioural needs, including ADHD. In June this year the DfES issued guidance on "Promoting Children's Mental Health within Early Years and School Settings" which has been circulated widely. The guidance covers not only mental health problems faced by children but also the approaches schools can take to promote children's mental health. It includes a section on attention deficit/hyperactivity which will help teaching staff identify pupils with ADHD. It also includes teaching strategies to help pupils with ADHD.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans his Department has to carry out research on the correlation between attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social exclusion; and if he will make a statement. [7334]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Department does not currently have any plans to carry out research on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and social exclusion. The

Department is providing or has provided support for a number of projects on ADHD in general. Details of 24 ongoing and 54 completed projects on ADHD are available on the national research register which can be accessed in medical libraries on CD-ROM or on the internet at www.doh.gov.uk/research/nrr.htm.

### Nutriprem

**Dr. Iddon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 25 April 2001, *Official Report*, column 287W, on Nutriprem 2, when he will announce his decision on Nutriprem 2. [6732]

**Ms Blears:** A decision on Nutriprem 2 will be announced shortly.

### Fall Prevention

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will arrange for the dissemination of reports on best practice in the prevention of falls; [8024]

(2) what financial resources he plans to devote to work to prevent falls. [8025]

**Jacqui Smith:** Falls are a major cause of disability and the leading cause of death due to injury in older people. Action to address this is detailed in the White Paper "Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation" which set targets to reduce accidental injuries and deaths, and in the National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People. The NSF includes a detailed service model for integrated falls services and milestones for their full adoption across England by April 2005. Staged implementation will help planning, and will be underpinned by an evaluation of the more detailed financial and workforce implications within the additional resources we have allocated to health and social care.

### Cannabis (Clinical Trials)

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what stage the trials into the medical uses of cannabis have reached; and when he expects to be able to announce the results. [7712]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Medical Research Council (MRC) is funding a clinical trial into the efficacy of cannabis extract and a single cannabinoid in the treatment of spasticity in multiple sclerosis patients. The trial is being run by Dr. John Zajicek, of Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, and the MRC Clinical Trials Unit. The trial started recruitment in autumn 2000. It will take three to four years to complete from the point of recruitment and the results will be published subsequently in peer reviewed publications.

We are aware that a second study on the development of a medicine derived from cannabis has started. This work which is expected to last for three years and is being led by Dr. Guy of GW Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Detailed evidence about clinical trials with cannabis and its derivatives was presented to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology inquiry into the therapeutic uses of cannabis. It provides information about clinical trials with cannabis and its derivatives that are completed and published or ongoing. The date of publication of the ongoing trials is matter for the investigators and sponsors. This information is recorded in the Committee's reports 'Cannabis: the Scientific and Medical Evidence' (9th Report Session 1997–98, HL Paper 151) and 'Therapeutic Uses of Cannabis' (2nd Report Session 2000–01, HL Paper 50), copies of which are available in the Library.

### Orthodontic Treatment

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were provided with orthodontic treatment per 1,000 of the population in each health authority area in the last 12 months. [6359]

**Ms Blears** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The table shows the number of orthodontic appliance claims per 1,000 of the population by health authority in England for 2000–01.

*General Dental Service: Number of claims for orthodontic appliances per 1,000 population, 2000–01*

| *Health authority* | *Claims per 1,000 population* |
|---|---|
| *England* | |
| Avon | 6.5 |
| Barking and Havering | 7.6 |
| Barnet | 15.1 |
| Barnsley | 2.1 |
| Bedfordshire | 1.9 |
| Berkshire | 5.8 |
| Bexley and Greenwich | 6.0 |
| Birmingham | 5.0 |
| Bradford | 1.8 |
| Brent and Harrow | 3.3 |
| Bromley | 10.1 |
| Buckinghamshire | 4.2 |
| Bury and Rochdale | 5.9 |
| Calderdale and Kirklees | 4.0 |
| Cambridge | 4.1 |
| Camden and Islington | 2.4 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 3.5 |
| County Durham | 2.3 |
| Coventry | 3.1 |
| Croydon | 6.7 |
| Doncaster | 5.7 |
| Dorset | 4.0 |
| Dudley | 3.7 |
| Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow | 3.8 |
| East and North Hertfordshire | 6.4 |
| East Kent | 3.6 |
| East Lancashire | 3.3 |
| East London and The City | 4.8 |
| East Riding | 3.1 |
| East Surrey | 5.5 |
| East Sussex, Brighton and Hove | 4.0 |
| Enfield and Haringey | 5.5 |
| Gateshead and South Tyneside | 1.9 |
| Gloucestershire | 6.4 |
| Herefordshire | 4.5 |
| Hillingdon | 7.5 |
| Isle of Wight | 5.6 |
| Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster | 5.6 |
| Kingston and Richmond | 7.9 |
| Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham | 3.8 |
| Leeds | 6.0 |
| Leicestershire | 3.7 |
| Lincolnshire | 2.5 |
| Liverpool | 6.5 |
| Manchester | 2.8 |
| Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth | 3.3 |
| Morecambe Bay | 3.4 |
| Newcastle and North Tyneside | 3.8 |
| Norfolk | 4.7 |

*General Dental Service: Number of claims for orthodontic appliances per 1,000 population, 2000–01*

| Health authority | Claims per 1,000 population |
|---|---|
| North and East Devon | 5.1 |
| North and Mid Hampshire | 3.1 |
| North Cheshire | 7.1 |
| North Cumbria | 2.6 |
| North Derbyshire | 4.5 |
| North Essex | 5.2 |
| North Nottinghamshire | 6.0 |
| North Staffordshire | 3.1 |
| North West Lancashire | 8.9 |
| North Yorkshire | 4.2 |
| Northamptonshire | 4.3 |
| Northumberland | 1.6 |
| Nottingham | 5.7 |
| Oxfordshire | 4.9 |
| Portsmouth and South East Hampshire | 1.8 |
| Redbridge and Waltham Forest | 7.8 |
| Rotherham | 2.8 |
| Salford and Trafford | 8.0 |
| Sandwell | 2.8 |
| Sefton | 1.4 |
| Sheffield | 4.8 |
| Shropshire | 5.6 |
| Solihull | 5.7 |
| Somerset | 4.4 |
| South and West Devon | 4.3 |
| South Cheshire | 11.0 |
| South Derbyshire | 3.4 |
| South Essex | 3.4 |
| South Humber | 2.5 |
| South Lancashire | 6.2 |
| South Staffordshire | 2.6 |
| Southampton and South West Hampshire | 4.2 |
| St. Helens and Knowsley | 2.4 |
| Stockport | 5.7 |
| Suffolk | 5.4 |
| Sunderland | 2.9 |
| Tees | 3.9 |
| Wakefield | 3.0 |
| Walsall | 2.7 |
| Warwickshire | 3.2 |
| West Hertfordshire | 9.2 |
| West Kent | 8.5 |
| West Pennine | 7.4 |
| West Surrey | 8.8 |
| West Sussex | 7.9 |
| Wigan and Bolton | 5.9 |
| Wiltshire | 5.4 |
| Wirral | 9.0 |
| Wolverhampton | 3.2 |
| Worcestershire | 5.7 |
| England | 4.9 |

## NHS Estates

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all those NHS hospital sites being considered for sale by NHS Estates and their respective bed capacities when last fully utilised. [7601]

**Mr. Hutton:** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* National Health Service Estates is responsible for disposing of surplus NHS property owned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. During the last five years these disposals have generated over £1.15 billion for reinvestment in the NHS.

Details of whole or substantial parts of hospital site disposals proposed for 2001–02 and those being considered for disposal thereafter, following review with appropriate health bodies, are outlined in a table which will be placed in the Library.

The NHS Plan provides for an extra 7,000 beds by 2004, with the biggest hospital building programme in the history of the NHS already under way. The disposal of properties that need to be replaced due to their age, condition or unsuitability to provide modern healthcare will continue to generate cash for reinvestment in NHS modernisation.

Due to the considerable elapse of time since many of the sites were last operated at full utilisation, following changing models of delivering patient services, details of bed capacities at that point are not readily available.

## Hospital Doctors

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital doctors have been *(a)* recruited and *(b)* left the NHS in England in each year since 1990. [7594]

**Mr. Hutton** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Department does not routinely collect data on the number of joiners and leavers from the medical and dental grades. The annual medical and dental workforce census contains details of individual doctors working in the national health service on 30 September each year. Figures are shown in the table.

*Headcount of hospital medical staff, England at 30 September*

| | Headcount |
|---|---|
| 1990 | 58,120 |
| 1991 | 58,700 |
| 1992 | 58,820 |
| 1993 | 59,720 |
| 1994 | 59,490 |
| 1995 | 62,720 |
| 1996 | 64,210 |
| 1997 | 66,840 |
| 1998 | 68,460 |
| 1999 | 70,000 |
| 2000 | 71,690 |

*Source:*
Department of Health medical workforce census

It is possible to link together files from consecutive years using the doctors' General Medical Council number, to see how many doctors are present one year and not the next, and vice versa. This provides a reliable general indication of turnover, which is used in workforce models, but does not provide reliable separate figures for leavers and joiners. The main reasons for this are:

Doctors do not receive full registration until they have completed their pre-registration year. For most doctors in the earlier stages of their careers, the census will show them with a limited registration GMC number in one year, and a completely different full registration number the following year. If we match these files together, the doctor would appear notionally as both a leaver and a joiner.

Similarly, some doctors in the latter stages of their career take career breaks, or work for periods of time in other sectors such as the armed forces. The census only counts those doctors working on a given day (30 September), so again leaving and joining rates tend to be slightly inflated.

### Renewable Energy

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the policy of the NHS is for purchasing of energy from renewable sources. [7616]

**Ms Blears** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The national health service complies with Government policy as determined by the Office of Government Commerce which requires that all public procurement of goods and services is based upon value for money, having due regard to propriety and regularity.

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency negotiated a national contract for purchasing electricity from renewable sources which was an option to the NHS from April 2000. However, it attracted an average 5 per cent. price premium. Therefore, no NHS bodies took up this option.

In the recent October/November 2001 contract round, electricity from renewable resources has been secured without a price premium. This should provide approximately 16 per cent. of the total NHS demand for electricity in the next 12 months.

### National Beds Inquiry

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will made a statement on the implications of the national bed survey for Worcestershire. [8042]

**Jacqui Smith:** The report of our National Beds Inquiry (NBI) was published for consultation in February 2000. The facts revealed by the NBI supported the concept of building a new bridge of national health service care for older people between hospital and home, and supported the first national strategy for providing NHS beds in 30 years.

Worcestershire health authority is currently modelling bed numbers and capacity for the year ahead. The health authority's modelling work on bed numbers will take into account the NBI.

The NHS plan took forward the findings of the NBI report by proposing action to increase bed numbers. The Department subsequently published new long-term planning guidance in February 2001 to implement NHS plan bed increases. This guidance will help local health economies ensure that they have the right number and mix of beds in place.

### Nursing Home Beds

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing home beds have been lost since June, *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the City of York and *(c)* in the North Yorkshire county council area in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement. [8052]

**Jacqui Smith:** The table shows the number of registered nursing[1] beds in 1999 and 2000, together with the absolute and percentage change in numbers for England, Northern and Yorkshire Regional Office and North Yorkshire health authority. Information is not available for the City of York.

[1] Registered beds in general and mental nursing homes, private hospitals and clinics

*Number of registered nursing care beds*

*Year ending 31 March*

| | *1999* | *2000* | *Absolute change* | *Percentage change* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| England | 202,200 | 193,300 | −8,800 | −4.4 |
| Northern and Yorkshire Regional Office | 30,600 | 28,500 | −2,100 | −6.8 |
| North Yorkshire Health Authority | 4,450 | 4,320 | −130 | −3.0 |

*Note:*

Numbers and percentages are rounded.

*Source:*

Source: Department of Health Annual Returns

### NHS Dentistry (Swadlincote)

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the availability of NHS dentistry in Swadlincote, Derbyshire. [8058]

**Ms Blears:** In September 1999, we gave a commitment that, within two years, everyone would be able to access National Health Service dentistry if, and when they wanted it, via NHS Direct. All health authorities in England now have in place dentistry action plans to ensure that everyone in their local area can access NHS dentistry if they want it, within a reasonable time and distance. These plans identify shortfalls in service provision and ways of tackling unmet demand.

Southern Derbyshire Health Authority has recently been allocated £35,000 from the Dental Care Development Fund to support the development of a new practice in this area. Discussions are taking place with a dentist who has expressed an interest in practising in Swadlincote. If an agreement can be reached with the dentist concerned, this will ensure the availability of NHS services at the new practice for five years.

### Delayed Discharge

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital patients are subject to delayed discharge in *(a)* Brighton, Hove and East Sussex and *(b)* Eastbourne district general hospital. [7662]

**Ms Blears:** Quarterly information for East Sussex, Brighton and Hove Health Authority, for patients aged 75 and over, has been placed in the Library.

Information on delayed discharges is not available centrally for patients under 75 and individual hospitals. Further information may be obtained from the Chairmen of East Sussex, Brighton and Hove Health Authority and Eastbourne Hospitals NHS Trust.

### Ministerial Travel

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement; [5899]

(2) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement. [6900]

**Ms Blears:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 823W.

## Departmental Staff

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate total annual staff costs for his Department and its agencies by nation and region of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [6865]

**Ms Blears:** The information requested is shown in the table.

£

| *Government office region (GORs)*[1] | *Total* |
|---|---|
| London | 103,913,670 |
| South East | 6,218,096 |
| South West | 8,879,731 |
| West Midlands | 5,839,820 |
| North West | 19,827,095 |
| North East | 5,873,323 |
| Merseyside | 219,074 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 38,968,069 |
| East Midlands | 1,257,707 |
| Eastern | 5,560,394 |
| Grand total | 196,574,360 |

[1] Government office regions (GORs) as defined by Cabinet Office for official statistical returns. It excludes data where GOR information is not held

*Note:*

Figures relate to England only and include the Department's agencies. The Department has no staff in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

*Source:*

Department of Health August 2001 payroll data

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what proportion of each civil service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the United Kingdom; what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement. [6868]

**Ms Blears:** The information requested is shown in the tables.

*Table 1. How many and what proportion of each civil service grade, located in each region and nation of the United Kingdom*

| *Government office region (GORs)*[1] | *All grades* | *SCS level* | *Level 6/7* | *SEO/HEO level* | *EO level* | *AO/AA level* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| London | 3,108 | 272 | 623 | 843 | 705 | 665 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 8 | 17 | 24 | 24 | 26 |
| South East | 182 | 10 | 45 | 59 | 39 | 29 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 5 | 22 | 30 | 20 | 23 |
| South West | 231 | 27 | 67 | 57 | 37 | 43 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 11 | 30 | 24 | 15 | 21 |
| West Midlands | 160 | 22 | 40 | 24 | 34 | 40 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 14 | 25 | 15 | 21 | 26 |
| North West | 810 | 23 | 88 | 140 | 132 | 427 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 1 | 7 | 14 | 21 | 58 |
| North East | 158 | 20 | 35 | 43 | 22 | 38 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 12 | 22 | 28 | 14 | 26 |
| Merseyside | 15 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 11 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 10 | 87 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 1,301 | 75 | 316 | 374 | 283 | 253 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 5 | 22 | 24 | 22 | 27 |
| East Midlands | 64 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 11 | 40 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 2 | 12 | 2 | 11 | 72 |
| Eastern | 131 | 16 | 51 | 25 | 18 | 21 |
| (Percentage) | 100 | 11 | 37 | 19 | 14 | 18 |
| Total | 6,160 | 467 | 1,274 | 1,568 | 1,284 | 1,567 |

[1] Government office regions (GORs) as defined by Cabinet Office for official statistical returns. It excludes data where GOR information is not held

*Note:*

Figures relate to England only. The Department has no staff in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

*Source:*

Department of Health August 2001 payroll data

*Table 2. The average salary for each grade*

£

| Grade | Average[1] |
|---|---|
| SCS | 67,725 |
| Grade 6 | 49,651 |
| Grade 7 | 39,983 |
| SEO | 28,833 |
| HEO | 22,818 |
| EO | 18,287 |
| AO | 14,218 |
| AA | 10,906 |

[1] The average of salaries for each grade across all Government office regions (GORs)

*Note:*

August 2001 payroll data

### Animal Experiments

**Mr. Djanogly:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to promote the benefits of the use of animals in the testing of drugs. [6508]

**Ms Blears** *[holding answer 16 October 2001]:* The Minister with responsibility for research at the Department, my noble Friend the Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, takes every available opportunity to make it clear that properly regulated research using animals is absolutely essential to the discovery of new treatments, as well as to the assessment of safety and efficacy of medicines.

### Prosthetics

**Dr. Evan Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the additional funding for silicone cosmesis for prosthetic limbs announced in Autumn 2000 will be given to disablement service centres. [8095]

**Jacqui Smith:** We have increased health authority allocations by £4 million over the next three years to provide silicone cosmesis for prosthetic limb users. This funding started in April this year with £0.5 million for 2001–02, £1.5 million for 2002–03 and a further £2 million for 2003–04.

These amounts were in health authority general allocations. We will be writing to chief executives and finance directors of health authorities that commission prosthetic services to ensure this funding is available to disablement services centres.

The contract for purchasing the silicone cosmesis coverings was negotiated and awarded on 1 October 2001.

### Head Injuries

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Government will publish their response to the Health Committee's report on rehabilitation following head injury. [8334]

**Jacqui Smith:** The response was laid before Parliament on 24 July. The response is called "Government Response to the Health Select Committee: Inquiry into Head Injury Rehabilitation", (Command Paper 5226). The response can also be downloaded from the Department's website at www.doh.gov.uk/nsf/longterm.htm.

### Rheumatoid Arthritis

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the health authorities in England providing funding for anti-TNF therapy for people with rheumatoid arthritis. [7721]

**Jacqui Smith:** Information on the prescribing of Etanercept (Enbrel) and Infliximab (Remicade) for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis is not available centrally.

Infliximab (Remicade) and Etanercept (Enbrel) are currently being appraised by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). Until NICE has completed its appraisal, National Health Service bodies have been advised to determine local prescribing policies based on the available evidence.

### Older People (Challenging Behaviour)

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on older people whose health problems include challenging behaviour. [8532]

**Jacqui Smith:** The National Service Framework for Older People was published on 27 March this year. It sets, for the first time, new national standards of care for all older people, across all care settings. The NSF looks at conditions that mainly affect older people, including dementia.

Standard 7 of the NSF relates to mental health and will ensure that those older people who have mental health problems have access to integrated mental health services to ensure effective diagnosis, treatment and support, for them and for their carers.

Although memory loss is a universal symptom of dementia, psychiatric systems and behavioural disturbances (such as depression, wandering, agitation, aggression, hallucinations and paranoid ideas) may also be present in those individuals with dementia.

The NSF recognised that specialist mental health services should be available to be consulted about and treat the most common mental health disorders in old age (depression, dementia, schizophrenia, mania and confusional states). Specialist care may be required for individuals suffering from behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

A full range of psychological and physical treatments should be available, including:

advice on behavioural management for people in residential and nursing homes;

drug treatment with antipsychotic and other forms of medications, where appropriate;

individual and family counselling and support.

The Department has issued guidance to staff on managing violence in all healthcare settings, including mental health. The guidance was issued as part of the National Health Service zero tolerance zone campaign to tackle violence against staff working in the NHS.

The guidance "Managing Violence in Mental Health" states that individual patients should be risk assessed for violence to themselves and/or others. Where a risk of violence is identified, an action plan or strategy for dealing with such behaviour should also be in place.

### Alcohol and Drug Misuse

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he has had with the representative body for alcohol and drug counselling regarding "Fit for the future". [8557]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Department consulted widely when developing the draft national minimum standards for care homes for younger people; these standards include services for drug and alcohol misuse. In addition, representatives from Alcohol Concern and DrugScope were members of the formal reference group that advised the Department. The consultation period for these standards closed on 21 September and the Department is currently considering the 500 responses received.

"Fit for the Future" was a consultation document for older people's services, published in 1999.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what flexibility he will allow care homes who specialise in treating alcohol or drug addicts under "Fit for the future" proposals. [8556]

**Jacqui Smith:** The Department has just completed the consultation on draft regulations for care homes and national minimum standards for care homes for younger adults, including those for drug and alcohol misuse. We will consider all responses fully before finalising our proposals.

### TETRA Masts

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the latest health evidence on the safety of TETRA masts. [8567]

**Ms Blears:** A report by the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (IEGMP) (the Stewart Report) provided a comprehensive and authoritative review of possible health effects of emissions from mobile phone masts. The report concluded that the balance of evidence indicated that there is no general risk to the health of people living near to base stations on the basis that exposures are expected to be small fractions of guidelines. The group was concerned that there could be indirect adverse effects on people's wellbeing in some cases and efforts have been made by Government to improve the availability of information about the siting and emissions from base stations.

The Report also indicated that there are some unique features of emissions from terrestrial trunked radio (TETRA) telecommunication systems that may be a cause for concern. This was addressed in a report by the National Radiological Protection Board's (NRPB's) Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation at the request of the Government. This report was published on the NRPB web site at the end of July 2001. In relation to exposures from TETRA base stations it concluded that exposures of the public would be small fractions of exposure guidelines and comparable to those arising from the operation of other telecommunication systems.

### Nursing and Midwifery Council

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the role of health visitors in the new Nursing and Midwifery Council. [8571]

**Mr. Hutton:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 3 July 2001, *Official Report*, column 150W.

### Global Warming

**Dr. Gibson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to assess the effects of global warming on health. [4697]

**Ms Blears:** In 1999 the Department commissioned an expert group on climate change and health in the United Kingdom to advise on the likely effects of climate change on health in the UK. The group included experts from meteorological and climate change fields as well as from public health, physiology, epidemiology and microbiology.

The review "Health Effects of Climate Change in the UK" was published for comment in February this year, and posted on the departmental website. The responses, together with the conclusions contained in the report, are currently being evaluated and a final version will be published later this year.

### Podiatrists

**Hugh Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to establish a register of podiatrists to include private practitioners; and if he will make a statement. [8218]

**Mr. Hutton:** The new Health Professions Council will determine arrangements for the admission to its register for each of the professions it regulates. The Council will have a duty to consult and involve all those likely to be affected.

### Lorazepam

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what clinical and prescribing advice has been given for Lorazepam with specific reference to the dosage and the period of time over which it is usual to administer the drug. [8215]

**Ms Blears:** All licensed medical products have an approved summary of product characteristics (SPC) which includes clinical and prescribing information.

Lorazepam is licensed for the short-term (two to four weeks) treatment of severe anxiety occurring alone or in association with insomnia or psychosomatic, organic or psychotic illness.

The usual dose for adults is 1–4 milligrammes daily in divided doses. Lower doses may be used in patients with renal or hepatic impairment, or in the elderly.

The dosage section of the SPC advises that Lorazepam should not be used for long-term chronic use, and that routine repeat prescriptions should be avoided.

The therapeutic indications section of the SPC specifies short-term use for two to four weeks.

The potential for the development of tolerance and dependence are discussed in the special warnings and precautions section of the SPC, where there is also

additional discussion of the need for the duration of treatment to be as short as possible. The potential for rebound (withdrawal) symptoms is also discussed.

### Generic Medicines

**Diana Organ:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the outcome of the review under Article 4 of the Council Directive 89/105/EEC of the statutory maximum price scheme for generic medicines dispensed in the NHS in the Community. [9040]

**Ms Blears:** We are today announcing our decision, taken in the light of consultation with interested parties, to roll forward, unchanged, the maximum price scheme for generic medicines. The scheme will remain in place pending decision on longer-term arrangements for the supply and reimbursement of generic medicines. The statutory maximum price will continue to be set on a United Kingdom-wide basis.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Domestic Terrorism

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on domestic terrorism following 11 September and the declaration of an international war on terrorism; and if he will make a statement. [7894]

**Mr. Blunkett:** I have been asked to reply.

The Prime Minister has made it quite clear that we will take all the action we judge necessary to deal with terrorism wherever it occurs—whether inside the United Kingdom or outside, or whether it is international or domestic. I would refer the hon. Member to the statement I made on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 923, which sets out some of that action relating both to international and domestic terrorism.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Friday 19 October 2001*

## DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

### Civil Service Reform

**Mr. Oaten:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he will publish a bill on the reform of the civil service. [8220]

**Mr. Leslie:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Lewes (Norman Baker) by the Prime Minister on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 819W.

### Government Bodies

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many Government bodies, broken down by Departments, next steps agencies and non-departmental public bodies, have been established in each of the last five years. [7807]

**Mr. Leslie:** Lists of central Government bodies are published regularly by the Cabinet Office. The "List of Ministerial Responsibilities" details Departments and next steps agencies and has been published at regular intervals since 1975. The specific statistics are not held in the form requested. "Public Bodies" lists non-departmental public bodies, NHS bodies, nationalised industries and certain public corporations and has been published annually since 1982. Copies of these publications are available from the Libraries of the House.

### Departmental Spending

**Pete Wishart:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will estimate total annual staff costs for his Department and its agencies by nation and region of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6781]

**Mr. Leslie:** The estimated staff costs for the Cabinet Office by region and nation of the United Kingdom is set out in the table.

*£000*

| *Region/nation* | *Staff costs*[1] |
|---|---|
| Scotland | 69 |
| Wales | 242 |
| Northern Ireland | 0 |
| North East | 7,309 |
| North West | 10,179 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 8,138 |
| West Midlands | 7,171 |
| East Midlands | 6,134 |
| Eastern Region | 6,342 |
| South East | 16,867 |
| South West | 7,470 |
| London | 70,995 |
| Total | 140,916 |

[1] Estimates for 2001–02

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Departmental Staff

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate total staff costs for his Department and its agencies by nation and region of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6787]

**Jane Kennedy:** The total amount spent on staff costs for the Northern Ireland Office and its agencies for the 2000–01 financial year was £226 million. Included in this figure is £102 million for prison officer redundancy costs. The bulk of this expenditure was in Northern Ireland, with a small amount spent on costs for London-based staff.

Details of NIO expenditure on staff are not recorded strictly by location and so an exact split between Northern Ireland and London cannot be given. However an estimated breakdown is that Northern Ireland accounts for £223 million and London accounts for £3 million.

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the number of staff employed by his Department by region and nation of the UK; and if he will make a statement. [6786]

**Jane Kennedy:** As at January 2001, based on full-time equivalents there were 1,359 staff from the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) employed by the Department (including Civil Servants working in the Northern Ireland Prison Service) and 195 staff from the Home Civil Service (HCS). Of these 1,554 staff, 1,415 are based in Northern Ireland, 115 in London, and 24 on secondment.

### Departmental Spending

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the total amount of spending by his Department was in each nation and region of the UK, in the last year for which figures are available; what proportion of his Department's total spending this constitutes; and if he will make a statement. [6791]

**Jane Kennedy:** The total expenditure by the Northern Ireland Office for the 2000–01 financial year was £1,149 million. The bulk of this expenditure was in Northern Ireland, with a small amount spent on costs for London-based offices.

Details of NIO expenditure are not recorded strictly by location and so an exact split between Northern Ireland and London cannot be given. However an estimated breakdown is that Northern Ireland accounts for £1,145 million and London accounts for £4 million.

### London Weighting

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the total value of London weightings and London living allowances for his Department; and if he will make a statement. [6788]

**Jane Kennedy:** The total value of London weightings and London living allowances for the Northern Ireland Office for the 2000–01 financial year was £242,500.

### Civil Service

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what proportion of each

civil service grade in his Department is located in each region and nation of the UK; what the average salary is for each grade; and if he will make a statement. [6790]

**Jane Kennedy:** The numbers and grades of staff and their average salary in the Northern Ireland Office as at January 2001, based on full-time equivalents, can be split as follows:

| Grade | Northern Ireland | London | Secondment | Total | Average salary (£) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *NICS* | | | | | |
| SCS | 23 | 1 | 0 | 24 | 57,741 |
| A | 121 | 0 | 3 | 124 | 39,277 |
| B1 | 125 | 1 | 1 | 127 | 29,197 |
| B2 | 161 | 1 | 1 | 163 | 23,144 |
| C | 373 | 4 | 2 | 379 | 17,497 |
| D1 | 318 | 0 | 2 | 320 | 13,038 |
| D2 | 213 | 1 | 1 | 215 | 9,937 |
| Industrials | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 10,104 |
| Total | | | | 1,359 | |
| *HCS* | | | | | |
| SCS | 13 | 5 | 5 | 23 | 66,435 |
| A | 8 | 13 | 1 | 22 | 36,126 |
| B1 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 12 | 26,816 |
| B2 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 21,422 |
| C | 22 | 22 | 1 | 45 | 17,680 |
| D1 | 9 | 22 | 5 | 36 | 13,284 |
| D2 | 19 | 13 | 0 | 32 | 10,760 |
| Total | | | | 195 | |

## PRIME MINISTER

### Downing Street

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) what internal reorganisation of staff has taken place in Downing street since June 2001; and if he will make a statement; [7162]

(2) if he will publish the staffing structures and lines of account at No. 10 Downing street consequent upon changes announced since June. [7308]

**The Prime Minister:** I announced a number of changes to my office in June designed to help achieve our commitment to the modernisation and reform in public services. These were outlined in a Downing street press notice dated 22 June 2001, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Jonathan Powell remains my Chief of Staff. Alastair Campbell as Director of Communications and Strategy has responsibility for the press, strategic communications and research. Anji Hunter, head of Government Relations, is responsible for relations across Government, with the devolved Administrations, and some foreign Administrations.

Within Downing street, Jeremy Heywood remains my Principal Private Secretary. He is responsible for the management and budget for all staff in No. 10 and leads the integrated Policy Directorate covering domestic policy which has been formed by the merger of the No. 10 Private Office and the Policy Unit. The European Adviser's Office is led by Sir Stephen Wall who is also head of the European Secretariat in the Cabinet Office, and the Foreign Policy Adviser's office is led by Sir David Manning who heads the Overseas and Defence Secretariat in the Cabinet Office.

I have established a Delivery Unit based in the Cabinet Office which is headed by Michael Barber to help ensure that we achieve our priority objective across the four key areas of public service: health, education, crime and transport. He will report to me under the day to day supervision of the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Lord Macdonald. Wendy Thomson is heading the Office of Public Service Reform also based in the Cabinet Office which is looking at how the Government's commitment to radical reform of the civil service and public services can be taken forward. She will report to me through the Cabinet Secretary. Geoff Mulgan is leading the Forward Strategy Unit which will undertake strategy projects at my request, working very closely with the Performance and Innovation Unit in the Cabinet Office.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the names and job titles of his personal, political and policy staffs at Downing street. [7163]

**The Prime Minister:** My political office is staffed as follows:

| Name | Position |
|---|---|
| Robert Hill | Political Secretary |
| Sally Dobson | Assistant Political Secretary |
| Razi Rahman | Assistant Political Secretary |
| Nita Clarke | Assistant Political Secretary |

*Note:*
Plus five secretarial and administrative support staff, two of whom work on a part-time basis

The staffing and associated costs for these staff are met by the Labour Party. As has been the case under successive Administrations, marginal costs associated with the political office are met from within the overall budget for 10 Downing street.

In addition, Rachel Cowburn works from the political office in her role as liaison officer between the Government and the Labour Members of the European Parliament and is funded by them for this purpose.

For information about my policy staff, I refer my hon. Friend to my previous answer to him today.

### Correspondence

**John Austin:** To ask the Prime Minister when he will reply to the letter of 10 October from the hon. Member for Erith and Thamesmead regarding Palestine; if he will make a statement; and if he will place copies of the correspondence in the Library. [8277]

**The Prime Minister:** I have received the letter from my hon. Friend and I shall reply shortly.

### "Defeating Terrorism: Campaign Objectives"

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister when he plans to publish the document "Defeating Terrorism: Campaign Objectives"; and if he will make a statement. [8197]

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary placed a copy of this document in the Library of the House on Tuesday 16 October.

### Railtrack

**Mr. Oaten:** To ask the Prime Minister what role was played by the Cabinet Office Delivery Unit in the placing of Railtrack into administration. [8224]

**The Prime Minister:** None.

### Social Policy

**Mr. Collins:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the roles in social policy of the *(a)* Social Exclusion Unit, *(b)* Policy Delivery Unit and *(c)* Downing Street Policy Unit. [7519]

**The Prime Minister:** The Social Exclusion Unit is a cross-departmental Unit of civil servants and staff from outside Government that delivers policy projects on specific social exclusion issues. It is currently working on four policy projects: on reducing re-offending among ex-prisoners; young runaways; raising the educational attainment of children in care; and, transport and social exclusion. The Unit reports to me through the Deputy Prime Minister.

For details about the Delivery Unit and the Downing Street Policy Directorate, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) today at column 1361W.

### Civil Defence

**Mr. Collins:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will institute a review of civil defence preparations in the light of the events of 11 September; and if he will publish a summary of its conclusions. [7514]

**Mr. Blunkett** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* I am responding as the Minister responsible.

As the Prime Minister told the House on 8 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 811, since the events of 11 September our civil defence arrangements have been under active scrutiny and review. Plans are in place to protect our key facilities and utilities. As Chair of the Civil Contingencies Committee, I have drawn together key Departments, the devolved Administrations, the police and the security service to drive this work forward. For reasons of security, the Government's contingency plans are not publicised but we will keep the House informed of any major development which concerns public safety and a number of Departments have already issued guidance to key individuals and organisations.

## TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS

### Railtrack

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what measures will be put in place to manage national tracks and signals; when he expects to establish a new company to take over from Railtrack; and if he will make a statement. [7964]

**Mr. Jamieson:** I refer the hon. Member to the Statement made to the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on Monday 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 954.

### West Coast Main Line

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what provision he has made in the Railway Administration Order in respect of Railtrack plc for the planned upgrades of the west coast main line. [8026]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The Government remain committed to providing a revitalised rail network in the UK, and the west coast main line upgrade is an integral part of that commitment. Work on the west coast main line project will continue and we will be discussing with the Railway Administrator the best way of ensuring that the project is taken forward.

### Departmental Properties

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by his Department, including and distinguishing between the Department itself, its next step agencies and its non-departmental public bodies, differentiating between purchases made as a result of the creation of new bodies and those purchases made by established bodies. [7821]

**Mr. Byers:** Since 1 April 1996, the Department and its Agencies have entered into leases on 225 properties. One hundred and eighty-nine of these added new properties to the DTLR portfolio and 36 were lease renewals. The total annual rental value of these leases is £12,151,310—new property accounts for £11,974,186 and renewed leases account for £177,124.

All of these leases were taken by existing organisations, with the exception of the Rent Service. This became an Executive Agency on 1 October 1999 and all 59 of its existing properties transferred to DTLR in 1999, with newly assigned leases.

We do not hold information on leases for DTLR non-departmental public bodies.

I am placing a list of all leases acquired by DTLR in this period, together with breakdowns by agency and region, in the Libraries of the House.

### Transport Safety

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions when he intends to publish a transport safety Bill. [7452]

**Mr. Jamieson:** We shall publish in this parliamentary session our proposals to take forward those of Lord Cullen's recommendations which require primary legislation.

### Incinerators

**Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans

the Government have to review planning policy guidance issued to councils regarding the siting of proposed new incinerators. [8086]

**Ms Keeble:** None. Comprehensive planning policy guidance is provided in Planning Policy Guidance note 10, 'Planning and Waste Management', which was issued in September 1999. It already provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to achieving sustainable waste management, through the careful siting of new waste management facilities including, where appropriate, incinerators.

### Air Travel (Health Implications)

**Mr. Kidney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what progress has been made in the stage 2 study into air travel and health. [8148]

**Mr. Jamieson:** Stage 2 of the Government's study into air travel and health was completed in June and a copy of the consultants' report has been placed on the Department's website. We are actively considering how to implement its main recommendations. In particular, urgent consideration is being given to possible collaboration with the World Health Organisation's recently announced global study of deep vein thrombosis.

### Rough Sleepers Unit

**Mr. Oaten:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many staff are employed by the rough sleepers unit. [8323]

**Ms Keeble:** The rough sleepers unit is charged with delivering the Prime Minister's target to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers across England to as near zero as possible but by at least two thirds by 2002.

The RSU is staffed by civil servants from across Whitehall, as well as outside experts from local government, the voluntary and private sector. There are currently 32 staff employed by the unit.

The unit published its second progress report in the summer which shows the significant impact the "Coming in from the Cold" strategy has made. The number of people sleeping rough in England has fallen by 62 per cent. over the last three years. It is estimated that there are 703 people sleeping rough in England in 2001 compared with 1,850 in 1998.

The unit is currently carrying out research and consulting organisations and individuals that impact on the strategy, with a view to developing a future strategy that will keep the number of rough sleepers as near to zero as possible.

### Homelessness

**Mr. Oaten:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what targets his Department has for the reduction of homelessness. [8322]

**Ms Keeble:** My Department's Public Service Agreement target on rough sleeping is to reduce the number of people sleeping rough by two thirds by April 2002, compared with June 1998, and to keep the number at or below this level thereafter. The rough sleepers unit is responsible for meeting this target and had achieved a 62 per cent. reduction by June 2001.

The recently established bed-and-breakfast unit's main objective is to reduce the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children. Once the unit has reviewed the current situation and is clear on base-lines, it will set clear and measurable targets.

My Department has given a commitment to prepare a national homelessness strategy, which will set out action to tackle homelessness by central and local government as well as other key stakeholders in the housing and voluntary sectors. As part of consultation on this strategy, which ended on 19 October 2001, views were invited on possible homelessness targets in addition to those on rough sleeping and bed-and-breakfast accommodation. My Department is now evaluating the responses.

### Airport Security

**Mr. Gareth R. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what funding his Department has made available for research into improving airport security in the last year; what criteria are used to assess bids for such funding; how much has been allocated for the 2001–02 financial year; and if he will make a statement. [8138]

**Mr. Jamieson:** In the current financial year, £1.67 million has been allocated for research into methods for improving transport security. A similar sum will be made available for the next financial year. In view of the recent events, research priorities have been reassessed and we are also considering whether additional expenditure this year and next could produce significant benefits.

### Planning

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to talk to the National Association of Local Councils about an enhanced role for parish and town councils in the planning process. [8528]

**Ms Keeble** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* The Rural White Paper (paragraph 12.3.2) noted that town and village councils could set out plans for their areas which could be endorsed in supplementary planning guidance. We will shortly be consulting on fundamental changes to the planning system.

### Motor Vehicle Registration Numbers

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions how many motor vehicle registration numbers remained unissued at 1 September in the series: *(a)* two letters, up to four digits, *(b)* three letters, up to three digits, *(c)* up to four digits, two letters, *(d)* up to three digits, three letters, *(e)* three letters, up to three digits, year suffix and *(f)* year prefix, up to three digits, three letters for (i) England, (ii) Scotland and (iii) Wales. [8512]

**Mr. Jamieson** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* Approximate numbers of vehicle registration marks in categories *(a)* to (d) are as follows:

*(a)* 49,000

*(b)* 660,000

*(c)* 4.9 million

*(d)* 7.2 million.

Exact figures cannot be provided as some marks from unissued series have been allocated periodically over the years, for instance to imported vehicles or made available through the DVLA sale of marks scheme. Information on the number of suffix or prefix combinations left unissued or details of the marks currently unassigned in England, Wales and Scotland is not available. It is estimated that there are hundreds of millions of such marks.

### Sheltered Housing

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (1) what assessment he has made of the role of scheme managers or wardens of sheltered housing schemes following the introduction of "supporting people"; [9133]

(2) if he will make a statement on his Department's strategy towards "supporting people", with particular reference to its impact on sheltered housing. [9131]

**Ms Keeble:** Draft guidance that my Department has developed through consultation with all the major stakeholders, including sheltered housing providers, is due to be issued on 31 October.

The Government are committed to supporting the independence of older people, both in their own homes, and in sheltered accommodation, if this is their choice. Local authorities are responsible for assessing housing and support needs in their local areas. Best value reviews of services to older people, and service level reviews of sheltered housing which receive "supporting people" grant, will together help local authorities ensure that sheltered housing provides high quality accommodation and support where it is needed most.

### Housing Stock Transfer

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what recent discussions he has had with *(a)* the Local Government Association, and *(b)* representatives of smaller, district housing authorities, on housing stock transfer. [9134]

**Ms Keeble:** Ministers in the Department have not met those parties recently to discuss housing stock transfer. However, the Department's officials are willing to meet any authority which is considering stock transfer as a housing strategy option, and they keep in constant touch with those authorities already on the housing transfer programme.

### Key Worker Housing Grant Scheme

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if he will list the bids he has received from bodies other than local authorities under the key worker housing grant scheme involving NHS staff; and for what amounts. [8689]

**Ms Keeble:** There was an excellent response to the invitation to submit bids for the £250 million Starter Home Initiative funding to help key workers in areas where high house prices are undermining recruitment and retention. More than 200 bids were received with a total value of £830 million. 175 of these bids, with a value of £580 million, were invited to proceed to the second stage of the bid process.

The majority of bids were from registered social landlords, although a small number were from other organisations, including local authorities and private developers.

My right hon. Friend announced on 6 September the allocation of £230 million of the funding for 95 schemes. The schemes will provide assistance to 8,000 key workers, including 4,000 NHS staff, to purchase their first homes.

A further 2,000 key workers will be helped with interest free equity loans of £10,000 using the remaining £20 million of SHI funding. One thousand of these key workers are expected to be NHS staff.

### Inverness-London Air Routes

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what plans he has to grant public service obligation orders for the Inverness-London air routes; and if he will make a statement. [8348]

**Mr. Jamieson:** The DTLR recently received a proposal from the Scottish Executive outlining the case for the imposition of a public service obligation on the Inverness to London route. This proposal is currently being analysed by the DTLR, while taking the criteria set out in European Regulation 2408/92 into account.

### Airline Safety

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what measures he is taking to secure the safety of passenger luggage on flights; and if he will make a statement. [9009]

**Mr. Jamieson:** All hold baggage on international flights from UK airports is searched or screened before being loaded for flight. All hand baggage is searched or screened before it is taken into the restricted zone of an airport, and may be subjected to secondary search at the departure gate.

### Blue Badges

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions what measures are in place to prevent the abuse of the use of blue badges meant for disabled drivers; and if he will make a statement. [9014]

**Ms Keeble:** There is a wide variety of powers available to local authorities who administer the scheme for tackling the abuse of blue badges. I have placed in the Library a copy of our information sheet, which sets out the options. At present:

- it is an offence under section 117 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 for the badge itself to be misused by a non-disabled person, the maximum fine on conviction being £1,000;
- local authorities have powers to withdraw a badge if the holder constantly misuses it or allows it to be misused by others;
- it is also an offence under section 47 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to park a vehicle which is not displaying a badge in a designated disabled persons' parking bay.

The issues of abuse and enforcement are a major part of a review of the scheme that we are currently undertaking.

In the meantime, it is, of course, open to anybody to bring instances of abuse to the attention of the police, traffic wardens or the appropriate local authority and we will continue to work with these bodies and stakeholder groups to minimise the potential for abuse and misuse.

### Sheltered Accommodation

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions if it will be his Department's policy to allow people living in sheltered accommodation to opt out of the care element in the service charge. [9128]

**Ms Keeble:** The "supporting people" programme, which starts in April 2003, will provide a new framework for planning and financing support services, including those provided in sheltered housing. Local authorities will administer the new programme, working in partnership with other agencies, service providers and those using or needing services. As part of this work, authorities will be expected to review existing services regularly and consider whether any changes should be made. Whether or not a particular sheltered housing scheme is provided on the basis that all the residents living there receive the same services will be entirely a matter for local decision.

## DEFENCE

### Royal Air Force

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which air squadrons are at less than 90 per cent. of full complement of *(a)* pilots and *(b)* navigators, indicating a percentage figure for each squadron. [9005]

**Mr. Ingram:** The table sets out the overall snapshot position, by service, using wherever possible the early October data used in my answer of 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 942W. In some instances however, the information post-dates that information.

The shortfall in aircrew is a well-recognised problem and the Ministry of Defence is taking a number of measures to tackle it.

Indicating the level to which a squadron is manned in a snapshot in time using a percentage formula risks creating a misleading impression due to the small number of pilots that typically comprise a squadron. The loss or gain of a single pilot can alter the figure by up to 14 per cent.

Furthermore, by providing separate figures for pilots and navigators, squadrons that did not register as being below 90 per cent. of a full complement in my previous response have sometimes done so in this one.

| | | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| *Squadron* | *Pilots* | *Navigators* |
| *Navy* | | |
| 800 | 63 | [1]— |
| 814 | 64 | 100 |
| 824 | 53 | 65 |
| 847 | 75 | 100 |
| 899 | 82 | [1]— |
| *Army* | | |
| 652 | 88 | [1]— |
| 653 | 74 | [1]— |
| 659 | 74 | [1]— |
| 661 | 85 | [1]— |

[1] Not applicable

AAvn is currently undergoing major structural change as it migrates from its old Anti-Tank (Atk) establishment to its new Attack and Utility Aviation establishments. These squadrons might have been shown at full compliment, but for the requirement to under implement personnel in the front line in order to provide the transitional posts required to fill Apache.

*Royal Air Force*

| | | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| *Squadron* | *Pilots* | *Navigators* |
| 2 | 85 | 79 |
| 5 | 75 | 81 |
| 6 | 79 | [1]— |
| 7 | 86 | 50 |
| 9 | 86 | 79 |
| 10[2] | 74 | 79 |
| 11 | 78 | 81 |
| 12 | 88 | 77 |
| 13 | 100 | 85 |
| 14 | 85 | 100 |
| 18 | 97 | 40 |
| 22 | 66 | [1]— |
| 24[3] | 54 | [1]— |
| 25 | 75 | 95 |
| 28 | 86 | 67 |
| 30 | 77 | 82 |
| 31 | 79 | 77 |
| 33 | 91 | 69 |
| 41 | 87 | [1]— |
| 43 | 88 | 82 |
| 47 | 98 | 89 |
| 70 | 94 | 86 |
| 72 | 80 | 91 |
| 111 | 82 | 89 |
| 120 | 89 | 85 |
| 617 | 79 | 80 |

[1] Not applicable

[2] Shortages will continue until fleet out of service. Operational output is met by using navigators who normally undertake the training of junior aircrew

[3] 24 Squadron is first C-130J Squadron currently training initial crew and will be manned at 100 per cent. by mid 2002 as programmed

### Non-Lethal Weapons

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a text of the Master Information Exchange Memorandum on Non-Lethal Weapons Systems agreement and the annexe reference UK-RN-N-97–57951 signed on 2 February 1998. [7116]

**Mr. Ingram:** The Master Information Exchange Memorandum (MIEM) on Non-Lethal Weapons Systems is an agreement jointly owned with the US Department of Defence. The Ministry of Defence does not make such agreements between nations publicly available. I am therefore withholding disclosure of this information under exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

### Gurkhas

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to recruit more Gurkhas. [8426]

**Mr. Ingram:** There is a requirement to recruit 230 Gurkhas per year to maintain present force levels. There are no plans to increase this force level in the future.

### Tornado Aircraft

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* Tornado GR1, *(b)* Tornado GR4 and *(c)* Tornado F3 in Oman for Saif Sareea II are (i) fully serviceable, (ii) undergoing first line maintenance, (iii) undergoing second line maintenance and (iv) undergoing third and fourth line maintenance; and if he will make a statement. [8478]

**Mr. Hoon** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* The operational serviceability of frontline aircraft will vary from hour to hour. Overall, the Tornado fleet deployed on exercise Saif Sareea has performed fully in line with expectations, despite the testing environmental conditions.

As of 17 October, nine of the 12 Tornado GR4s and 11 of the 12 Tornado F3s were fully serviceable. One Tornado GR4a is awaiting return to the UK. The balance of the Tornado force is undergoing first line maintenance and is expected to return to full serviceability shortly.

There are no Tornado GR1 aircraft deployed on exercise Saif Sareea.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* Tornado GR1, *(b)* Tornado GR4 and *(c)* Tornado F3 are in Oman for Saif Sareea II; and if he will make a statement. [8477]

**Mr. Hoon** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* There are 13 Tornado GR4 and 12 Tornado F3 aircraft in Oman for Exercise Saif Sareea II. These aircraft are making an important contribution to the exercise. No Tornado GR1 aircraft are deployed.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many missions have been flown by *(a)* Tornado GR1s, *(b)* Tornado GR4s and *(c)* Tornado F3s as part of Saif Sareea II to date; how many missions which have involved (i) Tornado GR1s, (ii) Tornado GR4s and (iii) Tornado F3s as part of Saif Sareea II have been (1) cancelled and (2) reduced due to (A) serviceability shortfalls and (B) technical malfunctions in the aircraft; and if he will make a statement. [8479]

**Mr. Hoon** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* There are no Tornado GR1 aircraft deployed on Exercise Saif Sareea II. The Tornado GR4, GR4a and F3 aircraft deployed have, despite the very demanding environmental conditions, performed fully in line with expectations and have made a full and effective contribution to the exercise.

Details correct up to 16 October are set out in the table.

| *Missions* | *Tornado GR4/4a* | *Tornado F3* |
|---|---|---|
| Planned | 271 | 208 |
| Flown | 209 | 191 |
| Cancelled for serviceability | 28 | 11 |
| Cancelled for technical reasons | 30 | 6 |
| Reduced for serviceability | 10 | 20 |
| Reduced for technical reasons | 4 | 19 |

### Child Support Agency

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to introduce attachment of earnings orders from the Child Support Agency to serving and other personnel employed by his Department. [8913]

**Mr. Ingram:** Under child support legislation, the Child Support Agency is able to request that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) implement deductions from the pay of both service and civilian personnel to meet child support maintenance payments. In the case of service personnel these are known as Deductions of Earnings Requests. These are effectively the same as Attachment of Earnings Orders which the Child Support Agency uses to obtain payment from 'non-resident parents' within the population at large, including MOD civil servants.

From the introduction of the legislation in 1993 it has been the MOD's policy to comply with all such requests, other than in exceptional circumstances. The MOD maintains a Memorandum of Understanding with the Child Support Agency which details the administrative procedures to be followed by both Departments when contacting service personnel. A copy is held in the Library of the House.

### Afghanistan

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many service personnel from Moray are involved in the Afghanistan conflict; and how many of these are based outwith the UK; [8597]

(2) how many Scottish service men and women are serving in the UK defence forces in the Afghanistan conflict. [8598]

**Mr. Hoon:** This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Cluster Bombs

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his policy is on the use of cluster bombs. [9142]

**Mr. Ingram:** Cluster bombs are a legitimate weapon that provide a capability against certain targets which cannot be effectively achieved in other ways. We reserve the right to use the most suitable lawful weapon available in the proportionate manner required by international law.

### Armed Forces (Pensions)

**Mr. Swayne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many proposals for additional life cover under the PAX+ Scheme have been completed but are not now on risk as a consequence of AIG's decision to discontinue new cover as of 21 September. [8784]

**Mr. Ingram:** The PAX Scheme (formerly known as PAX+) is facilitated by MOD and provides both personal accident and life cover for armed forces personnel. Life cover is available only to those who first take out PAX personal accident cover. PAX's underwriters—AIG Europe (UK)—closed PAX to new applicants from 21 September. However, details of the number of proposals for new or increased PAX life cover which were completed on or after this date, and, as a consequence, could not be taken on risk are not currently available.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Renewable Energy

**Mr. Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what additional measures she proposes to promote the construction of *(a)* wave, *(b)* solar, *(c)* hydro electric, *(d)* wind and *(e)* other renewable energy sources. [6756]

**Mr. Wilson:** The Department is taking a wide range of measures to promote the construction and development of renewable energy sources. The new Renewables Obligation and associated Renewables Obligation Scotland will oblige all licensed electricity suppliers in Great Britain to supply a specified and growing proportion of their electricity from renewable sources. The obligation will create a long-term market for renewables which will be worth over £1 billion per year by 2010.

The obligation will be the main mechanism through which we meet our renewables targets, and will be underpinned by direct Government funding worth over £260 million between 2001 and 2004. This will support a number of measures including my Department's £55.5 million R&D programme, and an extensive capital grants programme. An announcement will be made shortly on the detailed allocation of the £100 million for renewables announced by the Prime Minister in March this year.

*(a)* Wave: it was recently announced that my Department is providing further support to bring our funding for Wavegen's latest wave energy project to almost £1.67 million. This funding will assist with the further development of their new offshore wave energy concept and the construction and testing at sea of a prototype. This substantial funding confirms the Government's commitment to their new wave energy programme.

*(b)* Solar: in February this year in the Enterprise, Skills and Innovation White Paper, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced a major PV demonstration programme. The Department is giving £10 million to the first phase of this programme. The focus of this programme will be on social housing as well as public buildings. Meanwhile we have had two rounds of our Domestic PV Field Trial with a budget of £4 million.

*(c)* Hydro Electric power generation has played an important part in our overall renewables policy and will continue to do so. My recent announcement that refurbished hydro between 10 and 20 MW will qualify for the obligation is expected to lead to refurbishment of 30 hydroelectric stations and to company investment of over £250 million. This source of electricity will also benefit from the fact that all newly built hydroelectric stations, regardless of size, will receive support from the obligation.

*(d)* Offshore wind will benefit from a programme of capital grants worth at least £49 million. This will support early deployment of a number of demonstration projects and will provide a bank of knowledge and expertise to maximise the contribution of these two technologies to the UK's 10 per cent. target. We have also recently consulted on the offshore consents process, and plan to bring forward a new "one-stop-shop" approach which should make it easier for project developers to get their projects up and running.

*(e)* These and other resources could also benefit substantially from the £100 million announced by the Prime Minister earlier this year. In addition, in England, £12 million is available from DEFRA for energy crop planting grants, while the New Opportunities Fund has set aside at least £33 million for capital grants for this technology on a UK-wide basis. At least £3 million will be available to support small scale biomass heat projects. The obligation and associated funding will also support deployment of other renewables resources such as tidal power, and the advanced technologies of gasification, pyrolysis and anaerobic digestion.

### Broadband Telecommunications

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she will make a statement on the pricing structure for broadband used by BT and the cable companies. [8103]

**Mr. Alexander:** British Telecom and the cable companies set broadband prices on a commercial basis. As I have already made clear, they need to be driving these prices down, and demand up, so that more consumers have the opportunity to benefit from fast, always-on, access to the internet. Equally, prices must be set at fair levels. The Director General of Telecommunications has powers under the Competition Act 1998 to act where any company has entered into an anti-competitive agreement or is abusing a dominant position. He also has powers to take action if any licensed operator is not acting in accordance with the terms of its licence.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions she has had with BT about introducing broadband; and if she will make a statement. [8100]

**Mr. Alexander:** Ministers and officials meet BT regularly to discuss BT's role in introducing broadband services across the UK. 60 per cent. of UK households are now connected to a BT ADSL enabled exchange. This represents a significant investment by BT in broadband Britain. I have recently challenged BT to do more to exploit this investment more aggressively so that the benefits of broadband are spread to as wide a market as possible.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what comparable figures for broadband connection she has collated for the United Kingdom's G9 partners. [8102]

**Mr. Alexander:** As set out in 'UK Online: the broadband future', published in February 2001, international comparisons on broadband are patchy; however, in this strategy document the Office of the E-Envoy committed to undertaking a rolling programme of research.

In addition, the Office of Telecommunications (Oftel) published in January 2001 its report on international benchmarking of DSL and cable modem services. This compared the market for these technologies in the UK with that of France, Germany and the US. The study highlights that reliable and consistent data for all the G8 countries are difficult to obtain. However, Oftel will continue this programme of international benchmarking of broadband prices and roll-out.

I am aware that a forthcoming OECD study of the development of broadband access will compare, among other things, the levels of connection in OECD members, which include the G7 countries.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the United Kingdom has access to broadband; and what forecasts she has made for its future introduction. [8101]

**Mr. Alexander:** Availability of broadband services via cable, ADSL or wireless technology stands at around 66 per cent. of consumers and small businesses. The Government, in partnership with industry, are taking a number of measures in order to make the broadband market more extensive and competitive, building on the recent progress in advancing access across the country. However, the broadband market is at an early stage, and any forecasts are liable to be speculative.

## Post Office Closures

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many *(a)* post offices and *(b)* sub-post offices closed in each of the last 10 years in (i) total and (ii) Greater London. [6765]

**Mr. Alexander** *[holding answer 16 October 2001]:* The information requested on total net closures is set out in the table. I understand from the Post Office that historic data on the post office network before the year ending March 2001 are not held on regional basis. For the year ending March 2001, there were 10 net closures in the London region.

| *As at 31 March* | *Crown offices* | *Sub-post offices* | *Total* | *Closures in year* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990 | 1,339 | 19,532 | 20,871 | 159 |
| 1991 | 1,167 | 19,471 | 20,638 | 233 |
| 1992 | 1,019 | 19,141 | 20,160 | 478 |
| 1993 | 917 | 19,041 | 19,958 | 202 |
| 1994 | 800 | 18,982 | 19,782 | 176 |
| 1995 | 699 | 18,908 | 19,607 | 175 |
| 1996 | 653 | 18,761 | 19,414 | 193 |
| 1997 | 606 | 18,645 | 19,251 | 163 |
| 1998 | 601 | 18,407 | 19,008 | 243 |
| 1999 | 600 | 18,175 | 18,775 | 233 |
| 2000 | 598 | 17,795 | 18,393 | 382 |
| 2001 | 597 | 17,249 | 17,846 | 547 |

I am informed by the Post Office that of the closures of the year ending March 2001, the Post Office designate only four as permanent.

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many post offices have closed down in *(a)* 1997, *(b)* 1998, *(c)* 1999, *(d)* 2000 and *(e)* 2001. [7700]

**Mr. Alexander** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Net closures of post offices in the years 1997 to 2001 were as follows:

| *Year ending March* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1997 | 163 |
| 1998 | 243 |
| 1999 | 233 |
| 2000 | 382 |
| 2001 | 547 |

I am informed by the Post Office that of the closures of the year ending March 2001, the Post Office designate only four as permanent.

## Intellectual Property Rights

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment she has made of the research commissioned by the Patent Office and conducted by Mori into public attitudes towards intellectual property rights; and what action her Department will take to safeguard those rights based upon the results of this research. [8279]

**Miss Melanie Johnson:** The Mori research showed that long-term and sustainable action to improve public perceptions is needed and messages are more likely to be understood by the public if they can see the direct impact on them. The work the Department had already commenced, based on these approaches, is therefore continuing. Introducing school children to intellectual property concepts, improving the information available to creators and users of intellectual property and campaigning to highlight the consumer as well as business detriment where counterfeiting and piracy occurs are all key areas.

## Local Business Partnerships

**Brian Cotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many local business partnerships are operating in the United Kingdom. [8282]

**Nigel Griffiths:** There are 101 local business partnerships. They help local authorities and small businesses work together to achieve effective local regulation and reduce administrative burdens on small businesses.

## Sparkling Wines

**Mr. Keetch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations she has had from UK industry with regard to the abolition of the imperial pint measurement for sparkling wines; and if she will make a statement. [8264]

**Miss Melanie Johnson** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* I have received no representations asking for the pint to be permitted for sparkling wines.

## Boardroom Pay

**Vernon Coaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if she has reached a decision on how to improve accountability on boardroom pay. [9588]

**Ms Hewitt:** The Government believe that it is important that directors are seen to be accountable to shareholders. Dialogue between directors and shareholders on remuneration issues is more likely to be effective if underpinned by a framework that ensures that shareholders can vote on directors' remuneration. Equally, it is clear that despite the actions of many well intentioned institutional investors, many quoted companies have failed to respond adequately to the best practice recommendations on accountability to shareholders and performance linkage. The Government will therefore introduce secondary legislation to require quoted companies to put forward a resolution to shareholders on the directors' remuneration report every year. This will complement the Government's earlier announcement that it will legislate to strengthen the disclosure requirements in this area, particularly with regard to the linkage between pay and performance.

## HEALTH

### Digital Hearing Aids

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to grant free access to digital hearing aids to people hard of hearing; and if he will make a statement. [9021]

**Jacqui Smith:** Twenty national health service trusts in England have been fitting digital hearing aids for NHS patients since October 2000, as part of the Department's "modernising NHS hearing aid services" project. The project also includes increased investment in information technology, equipment and modernised patient processes. The Institute of Hearing Research is evaluating the project and its findings will help determine how changes in hearing aid services might be extended to all NHS audiology departments.

In the meantime all NHS trusts with the staff, training, equipment and experience necessary to fit digital hearing aids, are able to apply for access to the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) contract for digital hearing aids. Twenty five trusts have been given access to the contract allowing them to fit digital aids for patients outside the project.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Communications

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will publish the terms of reference given to Towers Perrin in relation to the development of the draft Communications Bill. [3850]

**Dr. Howells** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* A Steering Group, drawn from the five existing regulators and officials from my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, is advising the Government on the practical steps required to create Ofcom. Towers Perrin is assisting in this work to:

provide a clear overall view of the functions, processes, structures and resources in each of the existing regulators;

assess the options for Ofcom under each of these four headings;

propose criteria for evaluating these options; and

set out a clear timetable for the stages of work that will need to be carried out in order to get from where we are now to a fully functioning Ofcom in 2003.

The report was published on 12 October 2001 and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she will take to ensure that the consumers panel envisaged in the Communications White Paper will be representative of consumer opinion. [3853]

**Dr. Howells** *[holding answer 13 July 2001]:* Detailed provisions for the Consumer Panel will be included in the draft Communications Bill we shall be publishing later in the current Session. The White Paper makes it clear that the panel will have a remit to research consumer views and concerns, and will be able to decide its own research objectives. The panel will also have an explicit obligation to take due account of the views of consumers with special needs, including those on low incomes or with disabilities. These will be important elements in ensuring that the Panel's advice to Ofcom takes full account of all shades of consumer experience and opinion.

### World Athletics Championships

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what actions the Government have taken to maintain the United Kingdom's bid for the 2005 World Athletics Championships. [7694]

**Mr. Caborn:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for South Suffolk (Mr. Yeo) on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 815W.

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what reasons underlay the rejection of the Crystal Palace athletics complex as the officially recommended venue for the world athletics championship to be based in London. [8866]

**Mr. Caborn:** Patrick Carter's review of the Picketts Lock project commissioned by Sport England looked at a number of alternative venues for staging the world athletics championships in 2005, including Crystal Palace. Mr. Carter concluded that Crystal Palace was not a viable alternative venue for the 2005 championships due to the range of significant risks in delivering the necessary improvements to the stadium, athletes' accommodation and transport infrastructure.

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will make a statement on the use of the Commonwealth Stadium in Manchester for the world athletics championships. [8737]

**Mr. Caborn:** Patrick Carter's review of the Picketts Lock project commissioned by Sport England looked at a number of alternative venues for staging the world athletics championships in 2005. Following receipt of Patrick Carter's report, DCMS and Sport England officials initiated discussions with representatives of Manchester city council and Sheffield city council. The other alternative venues considered by Patrick Carter either offered no certainty of being delivered on time or no significantly lesser risk or cost than Picketts Lock.

The Government are grateful to Manchester and Sheffield city councils for their assistance in this process. It was clear that both cities would be suitable for staging the championships. However the costs of delaying the reconfiguration of the City of Manchester Stadium into football mode and the costs of compensation to Manchester city council and Manchester City football club would have exceeded the costs of improving the existing Don Valley Stadium in Sheffield.

**Mr. Reed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what estimate she made of the on-going revenue cost of Picketts Lock; and if she will make a statement. [9083]

**Mr. Caborn:** Patrick Carter's review of the Picketts Lock project commissioned by Sport England included an assessment that the Picketts Lock centre would run at an annual deficit of between £1 million and £1.5 million. Patrick Carter's report is available from the Sport England website on www.sportengland.org.uk.

**Mr. Reed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what discussions were held with the International Association of Athletics Federations at Edmonton about the Picketts Lock athletics project; [9081]

(2) if she will list the meetings held by her Department with the International Association of Athletics Federation officials in Edmonton during the World Athletics Championships. [9080]

**Mr. Caborn:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for South Suffolk (Mr. Yeo) on 15 October, *Official Report*, column 815W.

### Property Leases

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will list the number, value and location of properties newly leased in each of the last five years by her Department, broken down by those leased by the Department itself, its next step agencies and its non-departmental public bodies, differentiating between purchases made as a result of the creation of new bodies and those purchases made by established bodies. [7810]

**Dr. Howells:** During the period 1996 to 2001 the Department has taken new leases in respect of only two properties namely:

179a Tottenham Court road, London, to re-house the Government Art Collection, leased from 1 May 1999 for a period of 15 years at an annual rent of £408, 063 subject to five-yearly rent reviews.

1 Cockspur Street, London, to re-house Departmental staff and accommodate expansion. Leased from 17 January 2000 for a period of 13 years at an annual rent of £465, 451 subject to five-yearly rent reviews.

The Department has over 50 non-departmental public bodies and, in common with many other central Government Departments does not hold centrally the details of the estates of those bodies with independent land holding powers. Collection of this information from NDPBs would incur a disproportionate cost. However, a database of these properties is being compiled, entitled E-PIMS (Electronic Property Information and Management System).

### Olympic Games

**Mr. Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what plans she has to meet representatives of the British Olympic Association to discuss the 2012 Olympic games; [8752]

(2) what assessment she has made of the prospects for success of a UK bid to host the 2012 Olympic games. [8753]

**Mr. Caborn:** The British Olympic Association has yet to decide whether or not to bid for the Olympics in 2012, 2016 or later. The Government remain committed to supporting a viable Olympic bid. My officials are discussing the terms of a research consultancy with the BOA, Greater London Authority and the London Development Agency which will aim to obtain the evidence required to enable the Government to make a proper assessment whether such a bid, if made, is viable.

### Tennis

**Mr. Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to meet representatives of the Lawn Tennis Association to discuss the future governance of the sport. [8758]

**Mr. Caborn:** I met John Crowther and representatives of the Lawn Tennis Association on 5 September. We had a useful discussion about club structure and the LTA's programmes and initiatives.

### Licensing Laws

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if, as part of her review of licensing laws in England, she has made an assessment of the comparative licensing regulations in *(a)* Westminster, *(b)* Edinburgh, *(c)* Cardiff and *(d)* Belfast. [9146]

**Dr. Howells:** The review of the alcohol and public entertainment licensing laws in England and Wales was conducted by the Home Office between 1997 and 1999. Although no formal comparative analysis was conducted, the review included consideration of the licensing regimes operating in Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as those operating in many other countries. At the conclusion of the review, the Government decided that new and entirely unique licensing arrangements were required to meet the demands of the 21st Century in England and Wales. On 10 April 2000, the White Paper "Time for Reform: Proposals for the Modernisation of Our Licensing Laws (CM 4696)", was published and copies are available in the Library of the House. It sets out our proposals for reform and we intend to bring forward legislation to implement them as soon as parliamentary time permits.

### National Stadium

**Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport if she will place in the Library a copy of the report of the Task Force on the National Stadium. [9067]

**Mr. Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what plans she has to make a statement on the future of Wembley stadium; [8755]

(2) what plans she has to meet representatives of the Football Association to discuss the Wembley project. [8754]

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) if she will make a statement on the Wembley project; [8433]

(2) if she will make a statement on the proposals for a new National Stadium for football and rugby league. [8432]

**Mr. Caborn:** Patrick Carter is currently continuing discussions with the Football Association on the future of the National Stadium project arising from the conclusions of his review of that project. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make an announcement on the extent of any future Government role in that project once those discussions have concluded and she has discussed the issue further with both Sport England and the Football Association.

The Government have no current plans to publish Patrick Carter's report on the National Stadium as this would compromise the discussions that Patrick Carter is currently having with the Football Association.

### Rugby

**Mr. Reed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions she has had with the Rugby Football Union to facilitate the Australian RFU's tour during the autumn. [9082]

**Mr. Caborn:** Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have had any direct contact with the RFU on this issue.

### Gaming Machines

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to prevent the use of jackpot machines in private members' clubs; and if she will make a statement. [8915]

**Mr. Caborn:** The report of the Gambling Review Body (CM 5206) included a recommendation that the law should be changed so that members' clubs which were not casinos or bingo clubs would no longer be allowed to install jackpot gaming machines. We are undertaking public consultations on all the proposals in the report, and will not reach decisions until we have considered all the points made.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Women's Rights (Jordan)

**Ms Oona King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Jordanian Government about human rights abuses relating to women. [8071]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The UK has an active dialogue at official level with the Jordanian Government and with Jordanian NGOs about human rights matters.

The UK also plays a leading role in multilateral fora to promote the human rights of women, and supports initiatives to eliminate violence against women. At the UN Commission on Human Rights in April 2001, together with EU partners, we stated that social, cultural or religious factors cannot be used as a justification for violating the human rights of women and girls.

At the UN General Assembly in 2000, the UK co-sponsored and played a strong role in negotiating the passage of the first ever resolution on so called "honour crimes". The resolution was a significant step forward in raising awareness of this violent crime. It was adopted by a vote of 120 votes to zero, though 25 countries, including Jordan, abstained.

The UK's main development programme supports a number of reforms in social policy and social protection in Jordan, including the rights of women.

### Afghanistan

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reason Her Majesty's Government did not recognise the Taliban regime in Afghanistan between May 1997 and August 2001. [8515]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** HMG recognise states not governments or particular regimes. HMG recognise the State of Afghanistan. Like almost all other states in the world, the Government do not have normal government-to-government dealings with the Taliban.

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions between May 1997 and August 2001 he took advice on recognising the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. [8516]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** HMG has a policy of recognising states not governments. The Government recognises the State of Afghanistan. The nature of our relationship with the Taliban regime, with which we do not have government-to-government dealings, has been kept under regular review.

**Mr. Paul Marsden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimates he has of the quantities of heroin exported worldwide from areas controlled by *(a)* the Taliban Government of Afghanistan and *(b)* the Northern Alliance of Afghanistan in each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement. [8684]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** The size of Taliban and the Northern Alliance controlled areas has fluctuated in the last four years, making direct comparisons from year to year difficult. United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) surveys indicate that Taliban controlled areas of Afghanistan produced 2,592 tonnes of opium in 1998, 4,510 tonnes in 1993, 3,139 tonnes in 2000 and 21 tonnes in 2001. Northern Alliance controlled areas produced 108 tonnes of opium in 1998, 140 tonnes in 1999, 131 tonnes in 2000 and 164 tonnes in 2001. Some of this was exported as opium, some as processed morphine and heroin. The proportion exported as heroin appears to have risen over the last four years but the data available, based largely on seizures in Afghanistan's immediate neighbouring countries, is insufficient to provide a detailed breakdown.

An international inspection in April/May confirmed that opium poppy cultivation was effectively eliminated in Taliban controlled areas. Nevertheless, drug trafficking from those areas continued at a high level from stockpiles: the product of surplus product in previous years.

### China

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of China about the fur trade in that country; and if he will make a statement. [9010]

**Mr. MacShane:** It is for the Chinese Government to introduce and enforce domestic legislation to regulate the fur trade in China. We have raised concerns about animal welfare with the Chinese Government.

### Diplomatic Recognition

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is towards the recognition of *(a)* de jure and *(b)* de facto regimes; and to what extent that policy has changed since May 1997. [8514]

**Mr. Bradshaw:** Since 1980, it has been HMG's policy to recognise states, not governments. As set out in Lord Carrington's statement of 23 May 1980 where a new regime comes to power, whether it qualifies to be treated as a government will be left to be inferred from the nature of the dealings, if any, which we may have with it and, in particular, on whether we are dealing with it on a normal government-to-government basis.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Stakeholder Pensions

**Mr. Webb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the *(a)* number and *(b)* proportion of stakeholder pensions taken up by the target group of employees on modest earnings. [8048]

**Mr. McCartney:** We are undertaking a programme of dedicated research and analyses of administrative and statistical information as part of a wide-ranging evaluation of the impact of stakeholder pensions. Sufficient information on which to base a reasoned assessment is not yet available.

### Ministerial Travel

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) if he will list all official overseas visits undertaken by Ministers in his Department in each year since May 1997, indicating *(a)* the cost in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, *(b)* the number and grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) special advisers accompanying Ministers and *(c)* the number of official engagements or meetings undertaken on each visit; and if he will make a statement; [6919]

(2) on how many occasions in each year since 1992 non-commercial flights were used by Ministers in his Department for official overseas visits; what the *(a)* destination, *(b)* Ministers involved, *(c)* cost and *(d)* reason for use of non-commercial flights were on each occasion; and if he will make a statement. [6920]

**Mr. Darling:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer which the Prime Minister gave on 15 October 2001, *Official Report*, column 823W.

### Claimant Identity Checks

**Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many local authorities have adopted the verification framework for checking claimants' identities. [7473]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Two hundred and sixty-three local authorities have applied for, or have received, extra funding to implement the verification framework. To date 236 of these authorities have achieved full compliance with the scheme.

### Fraud and Error

**Annabelle Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much money he estimates was lost through *(a)* administrative error and *(b)* benefit fraud in (i) the UK and (ii) Scotland in (A) each of the last five financial years and (B) the 2001–02 financial year to date. [9007]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Information is not available in the format requested.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment has been made of the impact of removing the care element of the service charge for eligibility for housing benefit. [9132]

**Malcolm Wicks:** Housing Benefit is available to help people on low incomes meet the reasonable cost of their accommodation. It was never intended to help with service charges in respect of personal care. However, at present people who are liable to pay service charges for accommodation-related support may claim help through housing benefit. From April 2003, help with these charges will be funded through the "supporting people" programme.

### Incapacity Benefit

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what plans he has to change the therapeutic earnings rule for people receiving Incapacity Benefit; and if he will make a statement. [9022]

**Malcolm Wicks:** From 8 April 2002 we are introducing new permitted work rules for people who want to try some paid work while they are getting Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or Income Support because of illness or disability. The new arrangements will allow any person claiming benefit, based on incapacity, to try some paid work without the need for prior approval from a doctor.

Any person will be able to work:

(a) for less than 16 hours a week, on average, with earnings up to £66.00 a week for a 26 week period. The period can be extended for another 26 weeks if a person is working with a job broker, personal adviser or disability employment adviser who agrees that it will help towards work of more than 16 hours a week. There will be no limit to the number of times someone can do permitted work in this category during the currency of a claim, but there must be a gap of at least 52 weeks between periods; or

(b) for earnings of up to £20.00 a week at any time.

Someone who is already doing therapeutic work when the rules change can carry on doing it until April 2003. After that they can apply to do permitted work.

There are special arrangements for those disabled people who work in the community with on-going support or supervision from a professional caseworker (employed or engaged by a public body or voluntary organisation). They will not be subject to time limits. This is intended to help those people whose disability means that their work capacity is limited to less than 16 hours a week, but is more than the few hours covered by the £20 per week option. These are people with conditions that cannot be cured but may be amenable to control/management by

medication/therapy. This category will also include people who work in a sheltered workshop or as part of a hospital treatment programme.

We have been consulting disability organisations on these proposals and will be laying regulations before the House at the end of the year.

## EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### Sixth-form College, Hackney

**Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will ensure that future discussions on the proposal to create a new sixth form college in Hackney will have due regard to *(a)* the interests of students and staff at the existing Hackney Community College and *(b)* the future funding of that college; and if she will make a statement. [6735]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* Hackney Community College has taken an active role in developing plans for the new college and there have been consultations with a wide range of interested groups, including its staff and students. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is working closely with Hackney Community College to develop its plans for the future and I know the LSC has written to inform my hon. Friend that it has agreed funding to support Hackney Community College's plans for 2001–02.

We are committed to developing two strong further education colleges in Hackney to create greater choice and opportunity for learners in the area.

### Education Funding

**Paddy Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills if she will make it her policy to allocate per capita support to pupils on the basis of pupils' postcodes. [8906]

**Mr. Timms:** We are currently developing proposals for a new LEA and school funding system, which is to be introduced in 2003–04. As part of that work we will be considering ways in which data on pupils' postcodes might be used in the new formula, subject to accurate data being available.

### Specialist Schools

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of pupils achieved five A* to C grades at GSCE in each type of specialist school in 2001. [8885]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Information for mainstream, maintained specialist schools is shown in the following table.

*Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more Grades A*-C GCSE/GNVQ in 2001*

| *Specialism* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| Arts | 49 |
| Language | 62 |
| Sport | 47 |
| Technology | 54 |
| All Specialist Schools | 54 |

### Special Educational Needs

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of *(a)* teachers in special schools and *(b)* special needs teachers in mainstream schools do not have special educational needs qualifications. [8894]

**Mr. Timms:** This information is not collected centrally.

### Teacher Recruitment

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment she has made of the future recruitment of teachers in Gloucestershire; and if she will make a statement. [9008]

**Mr. Timms:** Local education authorities themselves are best placed to assess the future demand for teachers in their areas. Like other authorities, Gloucestershire will continue to benefit from the measures to promote teacher recruitment and retention that the Government have put in place. Between January 1997 and January 2001, the number of full-time equivalent regular teachers working in maintained schools in Gloucestershire rose by 270, from 4,410 to 4,680. During the same period, the number of full-time teacher vacancies in the county remained unchanged at 14.

### Special Schools

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many special schools closed in *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 1996, *(c)* 1997, *(d)* 1998, *(e)* 1999, *(f)* 2000 and *(g)* 2001 to date. [8891]

**Mr. Timms:** The number of special schools that have closed each year since 1995 are:

| *Year* | *Number of special schools closed* |
|---|---|
| 1995 | 23 |
| 1996 | 28 |
| 1997 | 32 |
| 1998 | 35 |
| 1999 | 35 |
| 2000 | 33 |
| 2001 | 22 |
| Total | 208 |

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many special schools have closed in each local education authority since 1997. [8892]

**Mr. Timms:** The number of special schools that have closed in each local education authority since 1997 are:

| *Local education authority* | |
|---|---|
| Barking and Dagenham | 3 |
| Barnet | 1 |
| Barnsley | 3 |
| Bath and North East Somerset | 0 |
| Bedfordshire | 1 |
| Bexley | 0 |
| Birmingham | 5 |
| Blackburn with Darwen | 2 |
| Blackpool | 0 |
| Bolton | 2 |
| Bournemouth | 1 |
| Bracknell Forest | 0 |
| Bradford | 1 |
| Brent | 0 |
| Brighton and Hove | 0 |
| Bristol City of | 1 |
| Bromley | 0 |
| Buckinghamshire | 2 |
| Bury | 1 |
| Calderdale | 0 |
| Cambridgeshire | 1 |
| Camden | 0 |
| Cheshire | 2 |
| City of London | 0 |
| Cornwall | 0 |
| Coventry | 0 |
| Croydon | 0 |
| Cumbria | 0 |
| Darlington | 0 |
| Derby | 0 |
| Derbyshire | 3 |
| Devon | 0 |
| Doncaster | 0 |
| Dorset | 0 |
| Dudley | 0 |
| Durham | 1 |
| Ealing | 0 |
| East Riding of Yorkshire | 0 |
| East Sussex | 1 |
| Enfield | 0 |
| Essex | 7 |
| Gateshead | 4 |
| Gloucestershire | 5 |
| Greenwich | 5 |
| Hackney | 1 |
| Halton | 0 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 0 |
| Hampshire | 3 |
| Haringey | 0 |
| Harrow | 1 |
| Hartlepool | 1 |
| Havering | 0 |
| Herefordshire | 0 |
| Hertfordshire | 2 |
| Hillingdon | 0 |
| Hounslow | 0 |
| Isle of Wight | 0 |
| Isles Of Scilly | 0 |
| Islington | 1 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 0 |
| Kent | 5 |
| Kingston upon Hull City of | 1 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 0 |
| Kirklees | 1 |
| Knowsley | 0 |
| Lambeth | 2 |
| Lancashire | 1 |
| Leeds | 4 |
| Leicester | 1 |
| Leicestershire | 0 |
| Lewisham | 0 |
| Lincolnshire | 0 |
| Liverpool | 2 |
| Luton | 0 |
| Manchester | 4 |
| Medway | 0 |
| Merton | 1 |
| Middlesbrough | 2 |
| Milton Keynes | 0 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 11 |
| Newham | 0 |
| Norfolk | 0 |
| North East Lincolnshire | 0 |
| North Lincolnshire | 0 |
| North Somerset | 1 |
| North Tyneside | 0 |
| North Yorkshire | 0 |
| Northamptonshire | 2 |
| Northumberland | 1 |
| Nottingham | 0 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1 |
| Oldham | 3 |
| Oxfordshire | 0 |
| Peterborough | 1 |
| Plymouth | 0 |
| Poole | 0 |
| Portsmouth | 0 |
| Reading | 0 |
| Redbridge | 0 |
| Redcar and Cleveland | 0 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 0 |
| Rochdale | 0 |
| Rotherham | 0 |
| Rutland | 0 |
| Salford | 3 |
| Sandwell | 10 |
| Sefton | 0 |
| Sheffield | 2 |
| Shropshire | 0 |
| Slough | 1 |
| Solihull | 0 |
| Somerset | 0 |
| South Gloucestershire | 2 |
| South Tyneside | 0 |
| Southampton | 0 |
| Southend-on-Sea | 0 |
| Southwark | 0 |
| St. Helens | 0 |
| Staffordshire | 1 |
| Stockport | 3 |
| Stockton-on-Tees | 0 |
| Stoke-on-Trent | 1 |
| Suffolk | 1 |
| Sunderland | 0 |
| Surrey | 1 |
| Sutton | 0 |
| Swindon | 0 |
| Tameside | 1 |
| Telford and Wrekin | 2 |
| Thurrock | 0 |
| Torbay | 0 |
| Tower Hamlets | 2 |
| Trafford | 3 |

| Local education authority | |
|---|---|
| Wakefield | 4 |
| Walsall | 1 |
| Waltham Forest | 1 |
| Wandsworth | 2 |
| Warrington | 0 |
| Warwickshire | 3 |
| West Berkshire | 0 |
| West Sussex | 0 |
| Westminster | 0 |
| Wigan | 5 |
| Wiltshire | 1 |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | 0 |
| Wirral | 0 |
| Wokingham | 0 |
| Wolverhampton | 0 |
| Worcestershire | 0 |
| York | 0 |

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many vacancies there are in special schools by *(a)* local education authority and *(b)* constituency. [8895]

**Mr. Timms:** Information on vacancies by constituency is not held centrally. The numbers of vacancies in January 2001 for full-time teachers in special schools by local education authority are as follows:

| | Vacancies |
|---|---|
| Darlington | 0 |
| Hartlepool | 0 |
| Middlesbrough | 0 |
| Redcar and Cleveland | 0 |
| Stockton on Tees | 0 |
| Durham | 0 |
| Northumberland | 0 |
| Gateshead | 1 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 0 |
| North Tyneside | 0 |
| South Tyneside | 0 |
| Sunderland | 0 |
| Blackburn with Darwen | 0 |
| Blackpool | 0 |
| Halton | 0 |
| Warrington | 1 |
| Cheshire | 2 |
| Cumbria | 0 |
| Bolton | 0 |
| Bury | 0 |
| Manchester | 0 |
| Oldham | 1 |
| Rochdale | 0 |
| Salford | 0 |
| Stockport | 1 |
| Tameside | 0 |
| Trafford | 0 |
| Wigan | 1 |
| Lancashire | 4 |
| Knowsley | 1 |
| Liverpool | 0 |
| St. Helens | 0 |
| Sefton | 4 |
| Wirral | 4 |
| East Riding of Yorkshire | 0 |
| City of Kingston Upon Hull | 0 |
| North East Lincolnshire | 0 |
| North Lincolnshire | 0 |

| | Vacancies |
|---|---|
| York | 1 |
| North Yorkshire | 1 |
| Barnsley | 0 |
| Doncaster | 1 |
| Rotherham | 0 |
| Sheffield | 0 |
| Bradford | 0 |
| Calderdale | 0 |
| Kirklees | 0 |
| Leeds | 1 |
| Wakefield | 3 |
| Derby | 0 |
| Leicester | 6 |
| Nottingham | 5 |
| Rutland | 0 |
| Derbyshire | 2 |
| Leicestershire | 0 |
| Lincolnshire | 2 |
| Northamptonshire | 4 |
| Nottinghamshire | 0 |
| Herefordshire | 0 |
| Stoke on Trent | 2 |
| Telford and Wrekin | 0 |
| Shropshire | 0 |
| Staffordshire | 3 |
| Warwickshire | 3 |
| Birmingham | 2 |
| Coventry | 0 |
| Dudley | 2 |
| Sandwell | 6 |
| Solihull | 2 |
| Walsall | 0 |
| Wolverhampton | 3 |
| Worcestershire | 2 |
| Luton | 0 |
| Peterborough | 0 |
| Southend on Sea | 0 |
| Thurrock | 1 |
| Bedfordshire | 5 |
| Cambridgeshire | 0 |
| Essex | 5 |
| Hertfordshire | 5 |
| Norfolk | 4 |
| Suffolk | 1 |
| Camden | 2 |
| City of London | 0 |
| Hackney | 5 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 6 |
| Haringey | 2 |
| Islington | 5 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 1 |
| Lambeth | 6 |
| Lewisham | 3 |
| Newham | 2 |
| Southwark | 5 |
| Tower Hamlets | 6 |
| Wandsworth | 6 |
| City of Westminster | 2 |
| Barking and Dagenham | 1 |
| Barnet | 4 |
| Bexley | 3 |
| Brent | 0 |
| Bromley | 2 |
| Croydon | 2 |
| Ealing | 0 |
| Enfield | 3 |
| Greenwich | 2 |
| Harrow | 2 |
| Havering | 0 |
| Hillingdon | 6 |

| | Vacancies |
|---|---|
| Hounslow | 0 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 2 |
| Merton | 5 |
| Redbridge | 0 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 3 |
| Sutton | 0 |
| Waltham Forest | 0 |
| Bracknell Forest | 1 |
| Brighton and Hove | 2 |
| Isle of Wight | 0 |
| Medway | 5 |
| Milton Keynes | 2 |
| Portsmouth | 3 |
| Reading | 4 |
| Slough | 3 |
| Southampton | 1 |
| West Berkshire | 1 |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | 4 |
| Wokingham | 3 |
| Buckinghamshire | 5 |
| East Sussex | 1 |
| Hampshire | 8 |
| Kent | 23 |
| Oxfordshire | 0 |
| Surrey | 17 |
| West Sussex | 6 |
| Bath and North East Somerset | 1 |
| Bournemouth | 0 |
| City of Bristol | 0 |
| North Somerset | 0 |
| Plymouth | 0 |
| Poole | 2 |
| South Gloucestershire | 0 |
| Swindon | 2 |
| Torbay | 1 |
| Cornwall | 0 |
| Isles of Scilly | 0 |
| Devon | 2 |
| Dorset | 2 |
| Gloucestershire | 3 |
| Somerset | 0 |
| Wiltshire | 0 |
| England | 280 |

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many special schools have closed in each parliamentary constituency since 1997. [8893]

**Mr. Timms:** The numbers of special schools that have closed in each parliamentary constituency since 1997 are contained in tables, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

## Teacher Vacancies

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many schools have approached the Government with difficulties over filling teacher vacancies *(a)* this year and *(b)* since July. [8896]

**Mr. Timms:** We do not keep detailed records on this, but the number of schools would be very small. Schools are advised to discuss any serious vacancy-filling difficulties with their local education authority, who will offer them all the help they can.

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what the total cost was of the support given by the Government in the last year to schools which had difficulties with teacher vacancies. [8897]

**Mr. Timms:** Information on what proportion of their recurrent funding individual schools decide to spend on teacher recruitment and retention is not collected centrally. Average funding per pupil now stands as £3,250, £540 higher in real terms than in 1997–98.

A small proportion of Government funding (for example, through the Teacher Retention and Recruitment Fund) is targeted at local authorities with high teacher vacancy rates.

## GCSE

**Mr. Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what proportion of pupils achieved five A* to C grades at GCSE in *(a)* specialist schools and *(b)* community schools in 2001. [8884]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The proportions of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE/GNVQ in maintained *(a)* specialist schools and *(b)* community schools in 2001 were 54 per cent. and 44 per cent. respectively.

## Schools (Correspondence)

**Mr. Willis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills how many individual items of *(a)* information, *(b)* guidance, *(c)* requests for information and *(d)* other correspondence have been issued to (i) local education authorities, (ii) secondary schools, (iii) primary schools and (iv) special schools in England since the commencement of the autumn term. [8904]

**Mr. Timms:** The number of items sent to schools and local authorities is shown in the table.

*Items in DfES mailings since the start of the autumn term 2001*

| | Recipient of mailing | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *LEA* | *Primary school* | *Secondary school* | *Special school* |
| *Purpose of mailing* | | | | |
| Information | 17 | 13 | 11 | 11 |
| Guidance | 9 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| Request for information | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Other[1] | 6 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Total this school year | 37 | 25 | 23 | 22 |

[1] Under this category are the full text and summary of the White Paper Schools—Achieving Success, and a letter from the Secretary of State following the events of 11 September.

## Standards Fund

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to simplify the procedure for schools to apply for Standards Fund money; and if she will make a statement. [9011]

**Mr. Timms:** Standards Fund grant is allocated and paid to local education authorities who must devolve around 75 per cent. of the grant to their schools to spend according to their own needs and priorities. It is for authorities and schools to agree the particular arrangements for allocating the grant to schools. Almost all Standards Fund grants are allocated to LEAs on a

formula basis and the Government expect LEAs to devolve grants to schools by a fair formula, in which case schools should not have to apply for grant.

We have already simplified the operation of the Standards Fund for 2001–02. Schools have more freedom to determine spending priorities—they will be free to move money between most of their allocations. Schools have a full 17 months from 1 April 2001 to 31 August 2002 to spend their allocation. This will mean an end to the rush to spend grant by the end of the financial year. Separate auditing of the Standards Fund is no longer required. The Standards Fund will be audited as part of the overall arrangements for local education authority and school expenditure, reducing the need for detailed separate accounting records for each Standards Fund grant.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Sexual Abuse

**Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the protection of people with learning difficulties from sexual abuse. [7398]

**Mr. Keith Bradley:** When the Government set up the Sex Offences Review in January 1999 its terms of reference included

"to provide coherent clear sex offences which protect individuals, especially children and the more vulnerable, from abuse and exploitation".

The recommendations of the Sex Offences Review to Government on reforming the law on sex offences were published in 'Setting the Boundaries' in July 2000. We are considering how to change all the sex offences in the light of over 700 responses to that consultation document including how to deal with sex offences against those with learning disabilities.

### Homophobic Crime

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the number of homophobic hate crimes there have been for 1999 and 2000 and the number of such crimes for those years broken down by *(a)* police force and *(b)* individual London boroughs. [7644]

**Mr. Denham:** This information is not collected centrally.

### Asylum Seekers

**Mr. Coleman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the asylum seekers the National Asylum Support System has housed since 3 April 2000 under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, have been offered *(a)* accommodation in the dispersal areas and *(b)* accommodation in London and the south east on the grounds that there are exceptional circumstances for their households not to be dispersed; how many disbenefited asylum seekers (i) the National Asylum Support System has agreed can be provided with accommodation in London and the south east on the grounds that their children have been educated in the same school for 12 months or more and (ii) have been offered accommodation in the dispersal areas. [8027]

**Angela Eagle:** As at the end of July 2001 the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) was supporting 27,740[1] asylum seekers in its accommodation outside of the London and south central regions and 1,070[1] in its accommodation in the London and South Central regions. It is the policy of NASS to offer accommodation in London only when there are exceptional reasons, such as medical reasons, to do so. NASS disperses asylum seekers to locations in the United Kingdom on a "no-choice" basis to relieve the burden on London and the south east; Brighton and Hove, Hastings and St. Leonards, Portsmouth and Southampton are the only four cluster areas used within the south central and east region.

Of those asylum seekers being supported in NASS accommodation in the London and south central regions, 240[1] were disbenefited cases. Of those being supported in NASS accommodation outside the London and south central regions, 20[1] were disbenefited cases. There is no available figure for the number of disbenefited cases offered accommodation in the London and south central regions specifically because their children had been educated in the same school for 12 months or more. Also, some of those disbenefited cases who were being supported in NASS accommodation outside the London and south central regions may have already been there when they became disbenefited rather than having been dispersed subsequently.

[1] Figures include dependants and are rounded to the nearest 10.

**Mr. Coleman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disbenefited asylum seeker households are awaiting a decision on their application to the National Asylum Support System. [8033]

**Angela Eagle:** The information requested is not available.

**Mrs. Ellman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning management and support services for asylum seekers at the Landmark and Inn on the Park in Everton, Liverpool. [7415]

**Angela Eagle:** Home Office Ministers have received a number of letters from my hon. Friend in recent months on issues relating to the Landmark and Inn on the Park. Representations have also been received from Liverpool City Council and the police.

Ministers have held meetings on the subject with local MPs and full consideration has been given to the issues raised.

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers awaiting adjudication there are in Wales. [7745]

**Angela Eagle:** The available information comes from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) who began supporting and dispersing asylum seekers who applied for asylum on or after 3 April 2000. Statistics from NASS, for the end of July 2001, show that for asylum seekers located in Wales 370[1] asylum seekers (including dependants) were

being supported in NASS accommodation and 110[1] asylum seekers (including dependants) were being supported with vouchers only.

Information on how many of these cases were awaiting adjudication is unavailable and could be obtained only by examining individual case files at disproportionate cost.

Information is not currently available centrally on the location of asylum seekers that either do not apply for NASS support or who were receiving Department of Social Security (DSS) or local authority support before NASS began.

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 10.

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department assessed the backlog of asylum applications as being in excess of 40,000. [7856]

**Angela Eagle:** The Immigration and Nationality Directorate completed a physical count of the asylum applications backlog on 4 September. Checks were then carried out to ensure that the count was correct but the announcement scheduled for 12 September was postponed following the terrorist attack in the United States.

**Ms Oona King:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to ensure that staff at the National Asylum Support Service understand the particular needs of asylum seekers with HIV and other long-term illnesses. [8076]

**Angela Eagle:** Asylum seekers have the same rights to national health service (NHS) treatment as any other person who is ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom.

Voluntary sector reception assistants who assist asylum seekers with the completion of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) application for support are trained to ask asylum seekers for details of any medical treatment or counselling they or their dependants may be receiving that would affect the type and/or location of accommodation allocated to them.

NASS caseworkers are aware that all relevant factors must be taken into account when deciding whether or where to disperse. This will include any information relating to medical or health needs. Caseworkers are always alert to any exceptional circumstances in individual cases, which might make it appropriate to depart from the general guidelines when accommodation is being allocated.

**Ms Oona King:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has taken to ensure that the National Asylum Support Service disperses asylum seekers with HIV to areas where appropriate support is available to them. [8077]

**Angela Eagle:** Asylum seekers have the same rights to national health service (NHS) treatment as any other person who is ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom.

Applicants may choose to notify National Asylum Support Service (NASS) that either they or their children are HIV positive and require specialist treatment. It is entirely a matter for the individual to decide whether or not to provide information about their health needs. Where health needs are stated on the NASS application form, and the individual gives his/her consent to that information being shared with the NHS, NASS will notify the receiving local health authority accordingly. Services for people with HIV are available on an open access basis for HIV testing and counselling, with onward referral to more specialised treatment as appropriate for those testing positive.

The Department of Health has advised that HIV support services are available in various dispersal areas and this is taken into account when accommodation is being allocated.

## Animal Research

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the recommendations of the Animal Procedures Committee report on public access to information about the use of animals in research. [7736]

**Angela Eagle:** I welcome the Animal Procedures Committee's report on openness, which was published on 22 August 2001, and I am grateful to the Animal Procedures Committee for the time and thought that it has given to its recommendations.

The Government's response to its detailed recommendations is as follows.

The Committee's recommendations regarding the relaxation of section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and the publication of plain English summaries of programmes of work licensed under the Act have been noted and will be taken into account in the current review of section 24.

It is already Home Office policy to encourage publication of research findings, but we cannot require it. However, we agree that we must do everything possible to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication of animal use in scientific procedures and will examine possible mechanisms for publishing negative results, consulting the scientific community and others as necessary.

We agree in principle that anonymised information regarding infringements should be published and will consider how this might best be achieved.

The content and format of the annual statistics is kept under review in line with the requirements of the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The statistics for the year 2000, published in July 2001, included an invitation to readers to submit comments and will be followed by wider consultation with the scientific community, who provide the data, and with other interested parties.

Summary information regarding the performance of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate, together with licensing information, is published as part of the annual statistics report and in the Home Office Annual Report. Scientific and the laboratory animal science and welfare literature and the Home Office websites also contain material produced by the Inspectorate.

We regularly encourage the scientific community to present its work more effectively to the public. The extent to which they do so is, however, a matter for the relevant organisations and establishments to decide.

It is intended that the advice provided to Ministers by quality assurance panels appointed in connection with special investigations by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate will be published.

We agree that interaction between the Animal Procedures Committee and other similar committees will be helpful and look forward to seeing more detailed proposals in the Committee's work programme.

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation the Government have undertaken to ensure that increased public access to information about the use of animals in research does not increase harassment of scientists and institutions involved in animal research. [7737]

**Angela Eagle:** Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 prevents the disclosure by Home Office Ministers and officials of information about the use of animals in scientific procedures that has been provided in confidence. Following the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, all statutory bars to the disclosure of information are being reviewed, including section 24 of the 1986 Act.

My predecessor, the hon. Member for North Warwickshire (Mr. O'Brien) held a seminar with representatives of animal protection groups and the scientific community in September 2000 to discuss the review of section 24 and he and officials subsequently held a series of separate meetings with some of the organisations that participated in the seminar. Views have also been received from the Animal Procedures Committee on this subject and from respondents to the consultation document on animal rights extremism published in March 2001.

The Government have a clear commitment to freedom of information and are equally committed to the maintenance of necessary protections for individual scientists and their research institutions. I am considering very carefully how these commitments can best be met. A decision on whether to appeal or amend section 24 will not be made until later this year.

## Illegal Drugs

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the result of efforts to reduce the proportion of people aged under 25 misusing illegal drugs in *(a)* the last month and *(b)* the last three years. [7344]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** The British Crime Survey provides data on the levels of self-reported drug use among a representative sample of the general population in England and Wales. The survey of smoking, drinking and drug use among school children provides equivalent data for those aged 11 to 15 years.

Table 1 provides the relevant data for 1998 and 2000 for those aged 16 to 24 years.

Table 2 provides the equivalent data for 11 to 15-year-olds.

*Table 1: Percentages of respondents aged 16 to 24 years reporting use of illegal drugs in the last year and last month, in England and Wales*

| | *1998* | *2000* |
|---|---|---|
| Last year | 29 | 29 |
| Last month | 19 | 18 |

Bases: 1998 = 1,296; 2000 = 1,517

*Source:*

Drug Mjsuse Declare in 2000: results from the British Crime Survey, Home Office Research Study 224

*Table 2: Percentages of school children aged 11 to 15 years reporting use of illegal drugs in the last year and last month, in England*

| | *Last year* | *Last month* |
|---|---|---|
| 1998 | 11 | 7 |
| 1999 | 12 | 7 |
| 2000 | 14 | 9 |

Bases: 1998 = 4,647; 1999 = 9,053; 2000 = 6,855

*Source:*

Department of Health Statistical Press Notice, July 2001. Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2000

## Suspicious Activity Reports

**Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reports of suspicious activity were received by the National Criminal Intelligence Service in the most recent year for which data is available from *(a)* corporate service providers, *(b)* foreign exchange bureaux, *(c)* banks, *(d)* solicitors, *(e)* accountants and *(f)* other organisations. [8135]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** In 2000, the Economic Crime Unit of the National Criminal Intelligence Service received 18,408 suspicious financial transaction reports, as follows:

*(a)* corporate service providers (including building societies, insurance companies, mortgage companies, independent financial advisers, credit card companies, and the securities and equities market): 2,766

*(b)* foreign exchange bureaux (including bureaux de change and money transmission agencies): 2,801

*(c)* banks: 11,532

*(d)* solicitors: 248

*(e)* accountants: 77

*(f)* other organisations: (including the gambling industry, motor organisations, regulators, asset management companies, auction houses, cheque cashier services, company formation agents, and estate agents): 984.

## Travellers

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his powers to deal with travellers. [8561]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* The police have powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to direct travellers or other trespassers to leave land when the appropriate statutory requirements are met. These are discretionary powers and it is the operational responsibility of the chief officer of the force concerned to decide when and how to enforce these powers. The effectiveness of this legislation is kept under regular review.

Research has been conducted to review the effectiveness of the current Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)/Home Office Good Practice Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Camping. This will be published shortly.

## Speed Cameras

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what policy guidance he has issued on the use of speed cameras to reduce speed on roads that do not present a specific problem nor have a record of traffic accidents; [8212]

(2) what advice his Department has given to police authorities regarding the use of mobile speed cameras to reduce traffic speed with particular reference to their location. [8214]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* The guidance on the use of speed cameras, set out in Home Office Circular 38/1992, is that they should be located where there is a known history of accidents and where excessive speed is a major contributory factor. The primary objective is to reduce accidents and increase road safety.

Following the announcement in August of the national roll-out of the netting-off scheme for speed camera funding, the Government are working with the police and local authorities to strengthen this guidance. Under the netting-off scheme cameras may be placed only where there is a history of speed-related injuries or at accident hotspots. Their use must be monitored to ensure that they help to reduce accidents. Those that do not will have to be moved to a more appropriate location or removed altogether.

Our aim in strengthening the guidance is to ensure that, as far as possible, one set of rules applies to all speed cameras, whether or not part of the netting-off scheme and this includes mobile speed cameras. Mobile cameras are not covered by the existing guidance, but we want to ensure that, in future, the use of these cameras is guided by similar principles to those that apply to fixed cameras to reduce accidents. Fixed site cameras will have to be highly visible, and so will officers using mobile cameras. All areas where cameras, whether fixed or mobile are in use will have to be clearly signed, and the deployment of cameras will have to be well publicised locally.

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money was collected *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Essex from (i) static and (ii) mobile speed cameras in (A) 1998–99, (B) 1999–2000 and *(c)* 2000–01. [8213]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* Information collected centrally does not identify the type of cameras used. Available data, by calendar year, are given in the table. Figures for 2000 will be available towards the end of the year.

Under the netting-off scheme for camera funding piloted in Essex and seven other areas, income from fines is used to meet the camera costs.

*Fixed penalty and court proceeding data for offences of speeding detected by cameras[1,2] for the Essex police force area and England and Wales, 1998 and 1999*

| | Fixed penalties | | Court Proceedings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of tickets[3] | Estimated revenue[4] (£) | Number of fines | Total amount of fine (£) | Average fine (£) |
| *England and Wales* | | | | | |
| 1998 | 338,800 | 13,552,000 | 25,500 | 2,928,300 | 115 |
| 1999 | 423,000 | 16,920,000 | 32,300 | 3,434,400 | 106 |
| *Essex police force area* | | | | | |
| 1998 | 8,665 | 346,600 | 1,702 | 227,400 | 134 |
| 1999 | 19,785 | 791,360 | 2,121 | 357,400 | 169 |

[1] Automatic cameras until 1998, all camera types for 1999
[2] Offences under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Motor Vehicles (Speed Limits on Motorways) Regulations 1973
[3] Paid ie no further action
[4] 'Estimate' based on £40 fixed penalty charge from 1995 to 1999

## Religious Discrimination

**Mr. Willis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation to outlaw discrimination on the basis of religion and faith; and if he will make a statement. [8476]

**Angela Eagle** *[holding answer 18 October 2001]:* The Government are tackling religious discrimination in a number of ways.

I have recently introduced proposals to widen the law to make incitement to religious, as well as racial hatred, a criminal offence, as part of the Government's measured response to tackle terrorism and those who exploit fears it raises.

The Government are committed to implementing the Article 13 EC Employment Directive outlawing discrimination in employment and training on grounds that include religion by 2 December 2003. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will consult widely later in the autumn on proposals for implementation.

The Census Act 1921 was amended to include a question on religious identity in this year's census. This will provide central and local government with reliable data on our faith communities, which will help inform the planning and delivery of services sensitive to the needs of faith communities.

The Human Rights Act 1998 also provides protection against religious discrimination.

But legislation alone is not enough, as research participants recognised. They favoured a comprehensive approach in which education, training and a greater effort to teach more in schools about the diversity of faith would all play an important part. We are looking at how best to do this.

## Police Stations (Essex)

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police stations in Essex have *(a)* closed and *(b)* restricted their opening hours in each year since 1997. [6223]

**Mr. Denham:** The information is set out in the table.

| | *1997* | *1998* | *1999* | *2000* | *2001* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reduced hours | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Closed | 0 | 1 | 41 | 16 | 4 |
| Increased hours | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Opened/acquired | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 |

Figures for 1999 and 2000 include the closure of detached beat offices in rural areas that were sold as a result of the force's rural review. These were houses with a police office attached (one room dedicated as a police office or front counter) staffed by one officer when on duty. Proceeds of sales are being invested in rural police station facilities.

## Police Numbers

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what the *(a)* establishment and *(b)* recommended number of police officers is; and how many vacancies exist for police officers in England; [7195]

(2) what the *(a)* establishment and *(b)* recommended number of police officers is for each police force in the South-East and South-West regions; and how many vacancies exist for police officers in each region. [7194]

**Mr. Denham** *[holding answer 15 October 2001]:* The Government do not set recommended levels of strength on a force by force basis. It is for individual chief officers of police to determine their staffing levels. We expect numbers of officers in England and Wales to reach record levels by 2003.

# INDEX TO THE

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

**SIXTH SERIES** **VOLUME 372**

## SESSION 2001–02

*16th July—19th October 2001*

**Printed indexes to Hansard**

The volume index is one of three printed indexes to Commons Hansard produced from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Indexing Service (POLIS). It contains references to material in the bound volumes of Hansard. The other indexes produced are:

- The fortnightly index to Hansard. This covers the same date range as the volume index but references are to the column numbering in the daily parts and weekly edition of Hansard.
- The sessional index to Hansard. This contains references to material in the bound volumes for a whole session.

**Indexes on the Parliamentary website**

Fortnightly, volume and sessional indexes covering material from the beginning of the 1999/2000 session will also appear on the Parliamentary website at http://www.parliament.uk with links to the full text of Hansard.

***SCOPE***

The indexes include entries covering:

- The content of all material recorded in Hansard, including debates, procedural motions and questions.
- The names of all Members contributing to the Parliamentary business recorded in Hansard.
- The names of some types of Parliamentary business whenever they occur in Hansard. These are 'Ministerial statements', 'Business statements', 'Opposition days' and 'Estimates days'.

***ARRANGEMENT***

- All headings are in one word-by-word alphabetical sequence, with Members' contribution entries distinguished from other entries by italics.
- Where a Member contributes to Parliamentary business and is the subject of Parliamentary business there are separate contribution and subject entries, the subject entry coming first.
- Entries beginning 'Mac' and 'Mc' are sorted in one sequence as 'Mac'.
- 'St', when abbreviated for Saint, is filed as 'Saint'.
- Numbers are filed as if spelt out, e.g. '10 Downing Street' as if 'Ten Downing Street'.

## *HEADINGS*

### *Choice of headings*

- *Specificity*—Entries summarise the overall content of a debate or question as specifically as the various POLIS thesauruses allow. For example, Education, Higher education, Universities or the name of a particular university is used depending on the breadth of the item.
- *Name headings*—Specific entries are included for the names of people, places, institutions, organisations, committees, programmes, initiatives, publications and legislation when these constitute the overall subject of an item.
- *Organisations and subjects*—Organisation entries are preferred for material about the general performance, administration and staffing of an organisation (for example, United Kingdom Passports Agency, Standards). Subject entries are preferred for what organisations do as part of their duties (for example, Passports, Fees and charges).

### *Geographical coverage*

- *Subject headings*—Subject headings are assumed to refer to the whole of England, Great Britain or the United Kingdom unless otherwise stated.
- *Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales*—Material relating to the whole of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales is indexed under these headings.
- *Places within the UK*—Material about specific towns, areas and institutions is entered under the name of the specific town, area or institution.
- *Foreign countries*—Most material relating to foreign countries is collected under the name of that country. Some additional material may be found under the names of—groups of countries, areas within countries, geographical features, place names associated with particular issues, politicians and heads of state, international bodies, and institutions and companies operating in those countries.
- *EC/EU material*—General material about the European Communities and European institutions as bodies is entered under 'European Communities' and 'EC institutions'. Organisational material about specific communities and institutions is entered under the name of the body, for example 'European Coal and Steel Community' or 'European Parliament'. Material about what the Communities and institutions are doing or propose to do is entered under various subject headings beginning 'EC' such as 'EC environmental policy'.

### *Parliamentary material and business*

- *Material about Parliament*—This is indexed under 'Parliament', the names of the two Houses, the 'Palace of Westminster' and parts of the Parliamentary estate (such as 'Portcullis House').
- *Committees*—Material about committees is indexed under 'Committees', types of committee (such as 'Select committees') and the names of individual committees (such as 'Home Affairs Select Committee').
- *Parliamentary proceedings/procedures*—Material discussing these is indexed under the specific type of proceeding (such as 'Parliamentary questions' or 'Oral questions'), procedure (such as 'Calling of Members') or issue (such as 'Unparliamentary expressions').
- *Legislation*—Entries for Parliamentary proceedings on bills and statutory instruments are entered under their titles. Where the lead word of the bill or statutory instrument does not provide a full or clear indication of the subject there are additional subject entries when the bill or instrument is debated. For example, debates on the 'Child Support Pensions and Social Security Bill' have entries under 'Pensions' and 'Social security benefits' as well as under the title of the Bill.
- *Members' names*—These are given in the form by which the Member prefers to be known.
- *Speaker and Chair*—Contributions by the Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker and deputies'. Contributions from the chair during Committees of the Whole House are brought together under 'Chairman of Committee of the Whole House'. Significant rulings and statements (as opposed to routine comments) are indicated by the sub-heading 'Rulings and statements' in both cases.

### *Guidance on headings*

- *Cross references*—'See' references indicate all the material has been entered under another heading. 'See also' references indicate that additional information may be found under another heading.
- *Concept thesaurus*—A copy of the subject thesaurus to POLIS, listing the concept entries used in the index, is available on the Parliamentary website. A hard copy is available from the Head of the POLIS Unit, House of Commons Library, 1 Derby Gate, London, SW1A 2DG (020 7219 6456).

***REFERENCES***

- References in the indexes are to columns rather than pages.
- References to debates, but not questions, are accompanied by the date of the item.
- There are separate sequences in Hansard for the material taken on the floor of the House, Westminster Hall sittings and written questions:
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  - References ending in 'w' indicate written questions.
- References under all headings except the names of Members contributing to Parliamentary business and the titles of legislation are listed in one numerical sequence irrespective of whether the material is taken on the floor of the House, is discussed at a Westminster Hall sitting or is a written question.
- References under the names of Members contributing to Parliamentary business and the titles of legislation are listed in numerical sequence under the following headings:
  - *Debates etc.* (which includes interventions and points of order as well as significant contributions to debates);
  - *Sittings in Westminster Hall* (covering all debates held as part of the Westminster Hall sittings); and
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***ABBREVIATIONS***

The following abbreviations are used in connection with the progress of bills:

- 1R=First reading
- 2R=Second reading
- Com=Committee stage
- Rep=Report stage
- 3R=Third reading
- res=resolution
- amendt(s)=amendment(s)
- *=matter taken formally without debate or division.

**Parliamentary background**

- The Parliamentary website at http://www.parliament.uk contains a range of information about Parliament and the full text of some Parliamentary papers and proceedings including Hansard.
- Information on current Parliamentary business is provided in the House of Commons Information Office *Weekly Information Bulletin*, available on the website and from The Stationery Office (020 7873 8499).
- Further information on Parliamentary proceedings and procedures is available from the House of Commons Information Office (020 7219 4272).

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